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To

Miss Hill

with best wishes

from

Bell

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A HOUSE IS BUILT

A HOUSE IS BUILT

By

M. BARNARD ELDERSHAW

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A HOUSE IS BUILT

BOOK I

WINDMILL STREET

CHAPTER I

THE STORE

At daybreak on the 16th of June, 1837, his Majesty's ship *Intrepid* made Port Jackson, one hundred and ten days out from Portsmouth. Her quartermaster, James Hyde, was one of the first to leave the ship on shore leave. With his friend Jacob Jeffries he strolled along the quay, sampling the wares of the inns as in honour bound.

"I like this place," said the quartermaster.

"It's a poor port that a sailor doesn't like when he's a hundred and ten days out. I will say this for Sydney, it's thick with pubs."

"I'd like to have a good look at the place."

"There's Flagstaff Hill. It's only a step, and you can see a good bit from there."

They worked their way to the left, to the rounded grassy hill outside the city. People in the streets turned to stare at the two men in uniform, the one a square, ruddy man, powerful and sanguine, the other of a lean and melancholy aspect, with a long, pale face. They walked in silence, one thinking of the future, the other of the past, after their kind.

When they reached the summit the water lay before, the city upon their right. It was eleven o'clock in the morning, and a clear day. They could see the *Intrepid* lying at anchor, the wharves and quays and the masts of shipping.

"Look!" cried the quartermaster, quite unnecessarily, and again, "Look!" He flung out his arm with the free gesture

of the entirely unselfconscious man. He turned to his companion, his face aglow.

"That's a wonderful sight, Jacob, the finest, the safest harbour in the world."

"Rio runs it very close," returned the cautious Jacob.

"A dago port, and not so fine either. Any city that is built here must become a great city. Can't you imagine what this will be like in a hundred years?"

Jacob grunted.

"Give me to-day in the sun," he said; "that's enough."

They sat on the grass in the winter sun, smoking, and after a long, companionable silence the quartermaster was moved to confidence.

"Jacob," he began, "I've been thinking a lot of the future these last few months. I've turned fifty—though that's nothing—but if I leave it too long I'll be caught."

He hesitated; but, as Jacob made no sign, ploughed on.

"What I mean is, if I wait till I'm an old man and the Navy is done with me I won't be able to begin a new life. I've climbed as high in the service as I can. I began at nothing, and the climb has been good fun, but now I'm there." His fingers, fumbling in the warm grass, found a pebble, and he tossed it in the direction of the *Intrepid*.

"That's a small hen-coop for a man to live his life in. I know every inch of it. I'm restless, Jacob, restless. I've seen them—you've seen them too—retired petty officers living on their pensions, growing hollyhocks and thinking of the past, settling down to be old ladies. The Navy's a blind alley, and when you've turned fifty you see the blank wall at the end."

There was a pause, and the quartermaster broke out again.

"I've thought of everything. There's no place for a man like me at home. Everything's overdone there, and they don't want sailors. But in a place like this, a growing place, they want men. Any man with energy could get on. I think I'll send in my papers and settle here."

Lying stretched out on the grass, his chin propped on his hands, the quartermaster looked out again over the scene

below them. To his right the inconsiderable city lay, a strange, chaotic mass of streets and buildings; to the left and immediately below him were the harbour waters glinting in the winter sunlight. Its great expanse seemed almost crowded with the motley craft that lay moored within its sheltering heads. Square-rigged whalers from the East and South Pacific lay anchored close to the wharves, and even to where the two men lay rose the rank, unmistakable smell of the whale-oil. Beyond them, farther out in the stream, were some tall East Indiamen and a host of small boats labouring from them to the wharves and back. There were weather-beaten traders from the China Sea and the western ports of America, and small, staunch vessels for the coastal trade.

The quartermaster turned back to Jacob, lying with closed eyes and face upturned to the sun.

"I don't know what I'll do yet, Jacob, but it will have to be something to do with ships and supplies, because those are the things I understand. I haven't haggled in every port of the Empire and fought with weevils on the high seas for nothing. Do you think it's a good scheme, Jacob?"

"A good scheme for you, Jim, if it's what you want."

"I've some money put away; not enough to buy into anything really good at home, but plenty, I should think, to set me up here. I don't want to buy into a thing that's made already. I want to make it. I'd send for my boy and my girls and we'd make a home somewhere down there. It's for them as much as anything. My boy William is in a counting-house, getting a round back on a high stool—that's no life for a sailor's son. All I'd want then would be a friend. Would you join me, Jacob?"

Jacob shook his head slowly. "I've followed the sea all my life since I was a boy of ten, and when the sea has done with me I want to go home."

"But this is not a foreign country."

"Maybe not, but it's the Antipodes, and that's no place for me to end my days after I've wandered all my life."

"It's a funny thing," said the quartermaster after a pause, "that you who are a man of peace should do the killing, while I——"

"While you fight weevils on the high seas—that's why."
"What's why?"
"I don't know, I forget."
"Dinner," said the quartermaster, standing up.

II

Two years later brought the sequel. Again a square, ruddy man stepped ashore. This time he came on the brig *Thetis* and wore civilian clothes. Under his rough blue serge, in a leather belt against his skin, he carried his life's savings. James Hyde had come to begin his life in a new country.

He left his dunnage at the London Tavern in George Street, and with characteristic promptitude set out to explore. He must find a site for his store near the harbour front, for ships must often be provisioned and loaded in a hurry. The man on the spot was the man for them. He must get his own wharf if he could, so he must be on the waterfront, but not too far from the markets where all the livestock and fodder changed hands. He strolled up to the markets now and looked in. This was evidently the housewives' hour. On the left, where butter and eggs, fruit and vegetables, were sold, there were busy groups of women, each with her marketing-basket on her arm. The hum of many voices rose from that quarter, pierced now and then by the dominating screech of a captive parrot or the half-hearted, melancholy crowing of a cock. On the right, where the cattle, horses, sheep, and swine were kept, there was hardly a man to be seen. Business must be brisker, the quartermaster thought, when they opened at six in the morning. The livestock seemed to be a mixed lot; there were a few lean, dejected cattle, the best of them having been culled out hours before, but the sheep were good. Their warm, homely smell, faintly reminiscent of the sun and of dried grass, dominated all the other smells of the market. It was a good smell, and somehow reassuring, but it did not reassure them. They huddled terrified into one corner of their pen, trying to find safety in a crowd, too frightened even to bleat. Only the pigs seemed at home, rooting and rolling as contentedly here

as in the sties where they were bred. Their heavy black flanks offered an unresponsive target to the prods of the quartermaster's stick. James Hyde walked on to look even more critically at the piled masses of hay, some a clear, pale yellow, but most of it coarse and green as reeds, the barley, wheat, and other fodder that would soon be forming an important part of his stock-in-trade.

As he strode out into George Street again the brickfields farther down the hill caught his eye. Cartloads of bricks and tiles were passing slowly by, the horses straining up the hill, their muscles taut with the effort. Beside them walked the carters, cracking their long whips and screaming lurid threats. The carts bumped heavily over the uneven stones toward the Barrack Ground three-quarters of a mile away, and James Hyde followed them. The barracks! He chuckled as he thought of the inducements he had held out to Maud when she had lamented at the thought of leaving England. Well, there did seem to be dozens of red-coats about, if that was what she hankered after. "Bless her!" he thought, "what a pretty lass she has grown! No wonder she has an eye for the lads." The quartermaster stared absent-mindedly at the square, flat buildings that lined the street, broken here and there by an occasional veranda that was a concession to Sydney's summer heat, at the signs that announced their business, and the carts of merchandise, the carriages, and groups of horsemen that passed along the street; but his thoughts were with his children, whose arrival he expected in a few months' time. Fanny and Maud were good girls, he thought indulgently; Fanny had even been eager to come, but William had disappointed him. He could strike no answering spark from William, wrestle as he might with the unaccustomed task of putting into words his thoughts and dreams. He could not make real to his son the sense of opportunity that had seized him in the new world. James Hyde shook off his thought. William would feel it for himself. Meanwhile he must have things ready when they came.

Afternoon found him prowling eagerly along the streets that branched off George Street where it stretched north past Sydney Cove. They were tortuous, narrow streets that

ended abruptly in a blank face of rock, or gave on to a flight of stone steps leading to a lower level and finally, in a veritable labyrinth, to the water's edge. The quartermaster pushed on, excitement growing in him. He stood on fairly high ground, but behind him it rose even higher in rocky ridges on whose slopes Fort Phillip stood. Just beneath the ugly, massive fort were the quarries from which convict labour had hewn the stone for building many of the houses he had passed. Just now they were idle, and the quartermaster looked beyond them to where the windmills stood that had given the street its name. It went no farther there, but below him were the harbour waters curving in to him from the right in a gentle sweep, shorn off suddenly to the left by a line of cliff. There were wharves in the curve below, one or two busy in the mellow afternoon sunlight with the unloading of the ugly black whalers alongside, others idle and deserted. James Hyde looked down on them with an appreciative eye. He took off his hat and scratched meditatively among his grizzled curls. This was the place he had been looking for—a wharf here with a good substantial store beside it, and his children living with him over the business. That was what he wanted, and he could see no reason why he should not get it.

III

The combined store and dwelling in Windmill Street was a two-storied building in the shape of a squared U, convict-built of stone, and already well seasoned with all the odours of the sea. As the quartermaster first saw it, with its dilapidated iron-studded doors made fast and all its shutters closed, it had a look of such nullity as to be almost menacing, so blank as to appear secretive. Its previous owner had drunk away first his profits, then his stock, and finally his life. His widow, who might have been potable herself, so drained and subdued was she, parted with her only asset to the quartermaster and returned to England with all the air of a fugitive.

To the road the building presented a flat, rectangular face,

broken in the upper story by six windows with small panes and ponderous wooden shutters, on the ground floor by a great cavernous entrance into which a wagon could be driven even by a drunken driver. Above this entrance was an iron bracket in the likeness of a gibbet, from which hung an oil lamp. It was lighted every evening at sundown and gave out a dusky golden light. The solid walls were of streaky yellow stone weathered to neutrality and bearing on every few feet the stigmata of the broad arrow. The store on the ground floor was very lofty, so that the whole building stood unusually high. It was roofed incongruously with galvanized iron, painted brown, and blistered by the sun.

The two wings stretched toward the water and partially enclosed a stone-flagged courtyard, the slabs already hollowed by the tread of many feet and the rolling of many casks. The great doorway was repeated on a smaller scale in the courtyard, so that any one standing in the road could see right through the building to a strip of water beyond. The ground floor of the left wing was given up to the hands. It consisted of a row of little cell-like bedrooms floored and walled in naked stone, and a mess-room furnished with a stove and wooden benches where the men cooked and ate their rations. These rooms had the ineradicable smell of old stone buildings, the smell of food inherited and gradually piled up from many meals, and the odour of old wood scrubbed with common soap. The right wing was a stable made to accommodate many horses. They came in drafts from the farms round Camden, Parramatta, and beyond, where they were bred, picked animals all of them, to stamp and whinney in their boxes for a few hours or a few days until a ship was ready to take them to their purchaser—the Honourable East India Company. The second floor of this wing was a hay-loft, where fodder was stored both for immediate use and for export with the horses. The loft, which seemed incredibly spacious and was always dark, could only be reached by an outside ladder, and had but one large aperture opening from eaves to floor. The wagon, mountainous with hay, drew up in the courtyard before this aperture. A man standing on top of the load pitchforked

it straight into the loft, and another passed it back into the recesses of the great dark chamber, working with a steady rhythm through the long, rich hours, of an autumn afternoon.

The wharves were blackened, salt bitten, and crusted with barnacles. The quartermaster rubbed his chin a lot before he bought them, but when the piles had been scraped the hardwood was found to be sound. Three small ships could be berthed at once, which was all that the store could manage for some time. There was room to throw out another wharf when trade demanded it.

Activity at the store and the wharf ebbed and flowed. Sometimes the men were working from sunrise until far into the night, hurrying to and fro with lanterns, shouting to one another. The girls in the room above the store would lie awake and listen to them and to the thud and rattle of ships' gear, strange men at work loading the ships, everywhere effort and urgency and the excitement of the night. Then there was the lull, wharves and courtyard were empty, and all the strange hands gone back into the limbo whence they came. Only the permanent hands were left—old Libby, taciturn and gruff, about whom some unexplained legend of loyalty clung; Jem, the little wiry man with the stout, shy young wife who lived in some unspecified place close by and was always sidling into the yard to speak to her husband; George, the young giant whose strength was discounted by his lumbering mind; Jackie, the boy who was somebody's nephew, but nobody ever knew whose; and Moses, the yellow dog asleep in the sun on the hot flags of the courtyard. Sometimes the men played cards sitting in a ring on their heels in the yard. More often they lounged and smoked, while in the store the quartermaster and his pale young clerk, Benjamin Shirley, plotted further activities. In this young man Maud took a mild interest when nothing more thrilling offered. She was always exceedingly polite to him, being embarrassed by the knowledge that his parents had been convicts.

About the store itself there was something splendid and elemental. Coming out of the brilliant sunshine it seemed immense to the dazzled eyes, and to anyone standing in its

rich twilight either doorway framed a brilliant but somehow remote and unreal picture of another world. The merchandise covered the floor and banked up almost to the ceiling in an epic confusion—barrels of tar, kegs of rum and of negrohead tobacco, great tubs of salted meat, sacks of rice and of flour from Van Diemen's Land, dark-coloured custard sugar in bamboo baskets, great coils of clean, blond manila rope, festoons of nets, whalers' outfits, sawn timber and unsawn logs, cables and chains sluggish and full of strength, blankets of the quality issued to sailors, brine and tallow, hides and oil—everywhere homely, strong, adventurous things in sufficient quantities to be imposing.

There is nothing more impressive than great masses of necessities. They seem to give back some of the life they feed, to cry out, "Behold in us the foundations of life!" Such a store inevitably had an atmosphere of its own, a very mosaic of odours. The quartermaster came, in time, almost to be able to gauge the quantities of his stock by sniffing the atmosphere. He never found this olfactory diapason burdensome. When William complained of it he remarked mildly that they were all good healthy smells and would do him no harm.

The store was his kingdom; he was absolute master there. The living-rooms above he handed over to the girls to do with as they wished. They could be reached either by inside wooden stairs from the store or by a stone stairway from the courtyard. Fanny and Maud did their best with the bare, gaunt rooms, but their ornaments and trifles never seemed at home in them.

Fanny and Maud slept in a large upper room overlooking the courtyard. The wharves were not immediately visible from their windows, but they looked into the harbour. All the sounds and smells of the waterfront and the store came floating up to them on the moist salt breeze. It brought the rank, salt smell of the sea at low tide, the same masculine smell of tar, the pungent smell of fish, the all-pervasive smell of the whale-oil, the ammoniacal smell of horses, with whiffs from the galleys of ships tied up at the wharves and whiffs from the pipes of men in the yard. For every smell there

was a sound, the rattle of ships' gear, the chant of straining men at the anchors, the thud of casks rolled over uneven stones, the voices of men, the stamping and whinneying of horses, the ceaseless lapping of the water against the sea-wall and the hulls of ships, the changing voices of the tides, and sometimes in the night the pounding, insistent beat of rain on the iron over their heads. But the two that remained with them afterward were the smell of the oil and the sound of the rain. The oil that was bought so dearly in effort and risk seeped through the whole waterfront; it clung to their clothes and flavoured their food. It was unforgettable, hateful, and yet the symbol of adventure.

IV

Maud was happy at the store. All her life she had been happy, and now she was happier than ever. Her charms were as potent in the New World as they had been in the old, so all was well with the New World. She liked the stir and bustle of the wharves, the freedom from those conventions that had cramped her style at school and in her brief sojourn in her aunt's drawing-room. Above all she loved the flavour of masculinity that rose as incense to her nostrils from the store and wharves below. In England she had been a young lady. Here she was little short of a princess, a cheerful Mariana looking out from her moated grange upon a world of masculine adventure. She was well aware of the fine contrast her rough surroundings offered to her delicate charms.

Lying in her narrow white bed, in the brief interval before sleep came upon her, she would listen to the lapping of the water, now low so that she had to strain her ears to catch it, now insistent as if filled with a mysterious urgency. Listening to it, she would think of herself as in a ship at sea, going somewhere, she never knew where, but somewhere splendid, with a cargo of bonnets and pelisses and a crew of handsome young sailors with flashing teeth and tenor voices and a master like Captain Hildebrand, splendid and mysterious. The funny thing about Captain Hildebrand, though, Maud thought sleepily, was that when he came he was never quite

so splendid and mysterious as you thought he was when he wasn't there. She wasn't sure that she didn't prefer the handsome young sailors, but perhaps she liked the bonnets and pelisses best of all. If only she could have a white satin bonnet, quilted at the back and embroidered with gold thread, like Miss Adelaide Gillam's! She hadn't taken her eyes off it all through the service on Sunday, and she was sure there wasn't another like it in Sydney; white satin, yes, and gold embroidery, yes, but not that bonnet. It must have come from London. But if she had a hundred bonnets what good would it be to her when they hardly went out at all? If only William were more amiable she knew Papa would let them go about. It was too bad that they should be so dependent on William when he was so selfish. A poor female could hardly put her nose outside the door alone.

But she wouldn't think of that, of the morning when they had heard a clatter in the road and she and Fanny had run to the window to peep out as they did a hundred times a day. They had seen the convicts on their way to Cockatoo, hundreds of them it seemed, fettered in twos, in the shame of the broad arrow, sullen and meek and dirty, a stream of filth in the sunlight. She had known how dreadful they were when she saw Fanny's face, white and hard and old, looking every day of her twenty-three years. She had burst into tears, and Fanny had pulled her away from the window, but for ever so long they had heard the *chink*, *chink*, with an undercurrent of dusty shuffle and the *clop* of the guards' horses. Even after the convicts had gone they went on hearing it. That night Maud had had a fit of hysteria.

"I can't!" she sobbed over and over again. "Fanny, I can't!"

"Can't what, my dearest?"

"They built this place. I can't ever sleep here again."

But she had slept at last, in Fanny's bed, with an innocence and abandon that stuck in Fanny's memory. She had got up next morning with red weals across her cheeks, but nothing more. She wouldn't look out on the road, she would look out on the harbour. To-morrow a ship would come in, a long black whaler, and she would hear the voices

of foreign sailors in the courtyard. To-morrow—two tides beset her. It was ebb-tide; she heard the water sucking round the piles; it carried with it the bonnet of the handsome Miss Adelaide Gillam, and the foreign sailors, and the black ships. The silent, warm tide of sleep welled up and bore away that frail and lovely bark, the *Maud*, upon heaven knows what mystery.

V

Fanny, a few feet away in her identical narrow white bed, would hear the same sounds, and set her own thoughts to them. To-morrow was market-day. It was certainly her duty to go and take Katie. Maud would doubtless make it an occasion for dressing up. The markets were good markets, she hadn't seen anything like them in London. She hadn't even known that food could be beautiful. The butter was primrose-coloured, in kegs, and when you wanted a couple of pounds the man would dig it out with brown pats, slapping it into shape, and with another pat would print the image of a cow upon it, and hold it out to you smiling like a conjurer pleased with his trick. She loved the tiers of lettuces, the earthy smell of the potato barrows, the giant rhubarb that reminded you how beneficial it was for the constitution—rhubarb would be good for William if only he would eat it; he suffered from humours. The eggs were really lovely, she would have liked one to carry in her hand. She always said, "Brown ones, please," before she could stop herself, though the man must think her dreadfully childish.

If she pressed her eyes now she could see the markets, a rectangle of sunlight with a U of shadow round it, blobs of colour down the left-hand side where the fruit and vegetables and poultry were set out—green of cabbages, white of onions, yellow of oranges, red of carrots, smudges of yellow that were ducklings. To the right Fanny hardly even looked, for there the livestock were kept and the men crowded. With Katie at her heels carrying the large covered marketing-basket she would walk modestly up the courtyard on the uneven flags, mount the single shallow step in the middle, pass the pump, and the man splashing water from a bucket

to keep the dust down, and give her whole attention to her marketing as a young housekeeper should. Maud would stray off to the stalls where the tight cottage posies of zinnias and pincushions and dahlias were exposed for sale. She never saw the beautiful wildflowers of the country in the markets—and who would have bought them, indeed? Maud would flutter her cherry-coloured ribbons before the country boys, talk to the barefooted children, and as often as not would be offered a few flowers as a gift. She would refuse and then accept, so as not to hurt the poor creatures' feelings, and go away blushing to look at the pigeons and chickens, and perhaps take the men to task for cooping them so closely or leaving them without water. Fanny kept a wary eye on her sister, as elder sisters should. She hoped that the greens would be good to-morrow.

Surely to-morrow the *Rosamund* would come in, she was a week overdue now, and then Papa would bring Captain Hildebrand up to dinner. She must be prepared. She blushed to think how much food she had prepared the first time he came, but you would expect such a big man to eat an ox, especially when he was just in from the sea. And he had eaten hardly anything. She hoped he would come, she liked to hear his talk.

"I wish, oh, I wish, I was a man!" thought Fanny, suddenly, passionately, in the midst of her trivialities. "I'd go whaling in Captain Hildebrand's boat, or I'd go exploring. I'd ask Mr Eyre to take me with him. I'd like, oh, I'd like to be hungry and thirsty and burnt to a chip. Why doesn't William go? I wish I was William."

A bubble of excitement rose and broke in her throat. She was aware of herself in her strong place on the coast, in the thin fringe of habitation between the uncharted seas and the uncharted land. On one side was the great sea where men risked their lives for whalebone and oil, going down south even to the icebergs and out east to the Coral Islands, whence the battered ships came in with the hungry, brutal faces of sailors lining their bulwarks, a vast field of effort and danger, of harshness and courage. On the other side of her was the great continent, limitless, unknown. She could feel the

effort there—men and women in bark humpies or in tin shanties, owning their land, breaking the wilderness, in drought, in heat, coming upon endless grass plains, the elusive rivers, the drying creeks. She thought of Mr Eyre pushing out toward nothing, something, the unknown, enduring. Fanny was afraid as even brave people can be in the night. She raised herself on her elbow and listened, her accustomed ear delving, beneath the sounds of the night, the ebbing tide, and the creaking of cordage, till it found Maud's quiet breathing; and reassured by that most beautiful and comforting sound—the gentle, regular breathing of a beloved person—she lay down again and slept.

VI

William, whom Fanny envied, saw little enviable in his position. Even now he too lay awake in his bed, staring at the ellipse of light that gleamed all night unmoving on his ceiling. It came from the lamp in the courtyard below, and William hated it fiercely. He almost hated his father too, for the irresistible energy that had caught him up from his quiet, clerkly, English life and swept him into a strange new life where he felt incompetent, ashamed, and ill at ease. "I didn't want to come," he thought resentfully. "Why should I have to hobnob with swaggering captains and greasy traders? And then he makes a fool of me before them all because I won't come down to their level. Well, he can, if it amuses him, but I won't be hail-fellow-well-met with every Tom, Dick, and Harry, or every Captain Hildebrand either."

William stared hot-eyed at the light, and it reminded him for the thousandth time of his chief grievance. No one lived over his store nowadays. Not another sea-trader in Windmill Street lived at his business. He felt that if only they lived down at the Battery the store might be all right. The Gillams and the Moors and the Franklins were all no better than the Hydes, but they didn't live at their stores. It made all the difference. Papa cut such a figure, owning his own wharf, and with his interests in this trading concern and that mill (not that he ever consulted William about the business—

oh, no! he knew no more than any outsider might learn), it made them look ridiculous.

"It's not fair to the girls," thought William. "How can they ever get husbands living here? Maud can beg as she pleases, I'll not take them anywhere while we are looked down on for living at the store. Oh!" He flung himself down on his bed, screwing his head into his pillow, "I can't ever bring Adela here."

He had come to the core of his trouble. His mind drifted away to Adela and to his wooing, that had been ardent but gentlemanly. He took a tormented pleasure in framing pictures from his memory of her, pictures so incongruous with the crude setting of his present home that he laughed bitterly to the unresponsive light. Adela as he had first seen her in the church at Otway St Mary's, her grave eyes cast down, the childlike outline of her face showing clear and pure against the dark background of the high pew. Adela playing riotously as a child might play—with her puppy on the lawn, flushing painfully as she realized the observation of a strange male—sewing at her long seam, with downcast eyes, not to be wooed from her stricken silence. Adela in her mother's drawing-room dispensing tea, shy but friendly, listening to William's plans for his future with flattering encouragement.

William could have wept at the contrast his present life offered to the career he had unfolded to her willing ears, but his thoughts raced on to that other rather disconcerting Adela, with bare shoulders and a fading musk carnation at her bosom, who had returned his kisses in the dark library. Her flowing sleeves, William remembered, had overturned a decanter of port, and with one arm round his neck she had dipped her forefinger in the dripping fluid and had traced a sticky, perfumed A upon his forehead. William blushed at the recollection : A of all letters, A for Adela of course, but she didn't know what she was doing. So he came to the last Adela—when he had kissed her good-bye he had felt her mouth widen with tears under his lips, and in the moment of parting and sorrow she had given him the sweetest moment of his life. He shivered a little with the sweetness

of remembered emotion, said slowly, "My affianced bride," and shivered again. Her father, of course, had been incensed at the idea of his daughter coming to Australia. He had swelled visibly, the port of a decade had glowed in his face, but Adela had said quietly and certainly, "I shall come when you send for me, William; no one can stop me when I am twenty-one. Don't let them frighten you, William."

Poor Adela, how she must miss him, how she loved him! The self-respect came flooding back into William's heart.

"I'll do something, Adela," he promised her across the sea. "I'll work for you, my dearest girl. There's Papa coming to bed. It must be nearly morning. I wonder what he has been doing—making money, I hope—for Adela."

VII

The quartermaster had been poring over his books in the store, setting his bold black figures beside the ethereal ones of the careful Benjamin Shirley and dropping blots on that young man's scrupulous book. He had sat for a long time with his broad thumb planted on the month's total, his Wellingtonian nose raised to sniff future and greater triumphs, deep in thought. Then, drawing out his silver watch of the good old turnip pattern and half the size of his fist, and seeing that it was one o'clock, he had slapped together the books and, taking up the oil-lamp, proceeded up the wooden stairs that led to the dwelling above. Behind him came the shadow of a square, powerful man; broad of shoulder, long of reach, the head serrated curiously by tight, grizzled curls. He pushed open the door at the top of the stairs and stamped along the corridor to his bare room, making no effort to moderate his footfall.

As he undressed his mind was still busy with his activities. "Creeping up, creeping up, this month better than last, last better than the one before. There's money here for a man of sense. I'll not offer Giles a penny more than two hundred pounds, not a penny—considering the trade I'll bring. It's a fair thing—and a voice in the running of the mill—no voice, no bargain. He ought to see that's for his own good,

pig-headed old fool. And we'll grind only Australian wheat. I ought to know good wheat when I see it. Absurd to import wheat to a country like this. We'll get plenty if we pay for it, they'll grow it for us. The people I carry for will take it, and the ships I provide 'll have to take it. Can't go wrong with flour—but not more than two hundred pounds. I'll build a mill myself if he won't close, and cut him out. Merchant princes in the new world. Old Gillam doesn't look much like a prince, but he's probably the solidest of them all. His daughters look like princesses, though, bedizened little idiots, and Master Humphrey's a jackanapes, but his mother doesn't think so—oh, no! Hildebrand's a good man—the Navy does teach you to know men. I don't think I can go far wrong with him. Don't know that I'd trust him on land, but he's the finest whaling captain afloat. The *Rosamund's* small, but she has good lines. She's a witch. I'd like to handle her myself. It makes me sick sometimes to see her going out with her square sails against the sky and her bow taking the water so gracious and so comfortable. She's practically my own ship and I've never sailed in her. When Hildebrand comes back I envy him; for there's nothing sweeter than to come home after danger and success, and to call for your rum in the peace of your heart."

He stood at his open window and listened to the *lap, lap* of the water upon his sea-wall. It was a good sound, a comforting sound, for a man cannot follow the sea for many years and be free of it at once. "Money-grubber," he muttered, pulling his night-cap down over his ears with a vicious tug. But though he could not have put it into words he knew in his heart that it was not the money he wanted, that these were only steps toward the ideal, that there can be the splendour of courage in merchant-venturing, and that a nation might be built by such men as he more honourably and more securely than by the swords of conquerors. That he should set his shoulder to the wheel in this new country, and by his efforts build a house where his children's children might live in honour and security, seemed to him as good a thing as a man could do.

CHAPTER II

THE WHALERS

In the morning, before it was properly light, Maud awoke to a stir in the courtyard. Jumping out of bed and peeping from the window, she saw against the pale misty wash of the morning a group of figures in oil-skins, carrying lanterns.

"Fanny," she called, "it's the whalers come in already."

"Captain Hildebrand?"

"It must be he. Who else would be so venturesome as to come in almost in the dark, and a misty morning too? I can see the tethering-post and the pump, all black and wet, and a little bit of wall, nothing else. I cannot see the harbour at all. It is like a picture, Fanny, so very strange."

She was kneeling at the open window, the cold, damp air driving the colour from her face, the little curls standing up round her forehead.

"Why are you not curious, Fanny? It is so strange, they are standing there as if they did not know what to do. The men are carrying something in a tub. Look! Captain Hildebrand is standing apart. He is in sea-boots and a great cloak."

Fanny came too, and peered out over Maud's head.

"Something must have happened, they come in so quietly."

"Perhaps it is because it is so early."

"Now the door is being unfastened. Papa is going out."

"Does Papa ever sleep, do you think?"

"There is nothing the matter, but they seem excited. They have had a good trip."

"Look, Fanny, there is the tub. They are carrying it right in to the store. Whatever can it be? I smell something, too—nice."

"Soon we shall smell nothing but oil."

They looked again into the empty courtyard. It was very quiet now; the pump and the tethering-post gleamed wet and black, the harbour was invisible, but the courtyard seemed to be under a thin grey film of water. The lamp still burned, but its rays were hedged in by mist, so that it hung an impotent yellow blob. The store had swallowed the men completely, as if they had never been there.

"Perhaps it will never dawn," said Maud, with a little shiver.

"Come to bed and get warm again; it can only be five o'clock. It is not nearly time to get up."

They slept again in their warm beds, and the night folded in over the adventure of the dawn. Two hours later, dressing in the unnatural darkness of an early summer morning and fumbling in their drawers for merinoes laid aside a month ago, Maud said, "I dreamed the whalers had come back and they carried up something in a tub."

"So it was true, then. I thought I had dreamed it ever so long ago."

It was true. The men were already at work, and the unloading had begun. The captain himself had come to breakfast. Maud could not contain herself.

"Papa, what was in the tub?"

"Why, bless the girl, she's as curious as a cat!"

"I pray you, Captain Hildebrand, tell me what was in the tub?"

"What tub, Miss Maud?"

"Why, the tub you brought in this morning. How you do plague a poor female, Captain Hildebrand!"

"Come and see, then," said the quartermaster good-humouredly, leading the way downstairs.

"Will you not come too, Miss Fanny?" asked Captain Hildebrand.

They trooped down the stairs to the store, and there stood the mysterious tub. It held only a mass of some thick, waxy substance between grey and yellow in colour. A faint fragrance rose from it and mingled with the odours of the store. Maud was disappointed.

"Oh!" she said, "it's only a lump of tallow."

"Smell," said the quartermaster, rubbing his finger over the grey, slimy mass and holding it to his daughter's nose.

"Lovely!" she cried. "Smell, Fanny!"

"It's ambergris," said the captain. "It is worth a guinea an ounce. I found it floating in the sea, south of Van Diemen's Land. I saw it rolling in our wash for all the world like a porpoise, and we caught it in a net and pulled it aboard. Then pouf! we smelt the ambergris."

"There's five hundred pounds' worth," said the quartermaster, with satisfaction.

That day was like a carnival; the crew were given extra rations of rum, and made very merry. The work of unloading went with a swing.

"Is he not a marvellous man to fish a fortune out of the sea like that?" Maud whispered. "But Papa owns part of the boat, so half the ambergris will belong to us."

"As Captain Hildebrand found it I think it should be his."

"So do I; but what would you do if you had two hundred and fifty pounds, Fanny?"

II

Maud talked a lot about Captain Hildebrand. She would pause in her embroidery and say suddenly, "He's rather like a Viking, don't you think?" and Fanny would start guiltily and ask, "Who, Maud?"

Then Maud had her great idea, which she whispered to Fanny by candlelight. She thought he must be Somebody, that Hildebrand was really his Christian name.

"I don't mean that he's in hiding—that doesn't sound very nice; but he has had to flee for some good reason, and he is biding his time, or—or—he's shielding somebody. The more I think about it, Fanny, the more I feel sure he's Somebody."

She tried over a few likely names, Hildebrand de Vere, Hildebrand Montmorency, Richard Hildebrand de Balliol. The last she liked very well. Fanny told her not to be a goose, but some of the nonsense stuck, for after all were they

not both nurtured on the same fiction? They had at least the authority of Mrs Mary Meeke's seventeen novels for believing that an heroic young man in a low rank of life almost invariably proves in the end to be the son of a duke. Maud, whose favourite novels were *Count St Blanchard* and *The Spanish Campaign*, found the evidence convincing enough, at any rate. She even began to plague the quartermaster.

"Papa, do you not think Captain Hildebrand a very fine man?"

"He is a very good seaman, my dear."

"Does he not give you his confidence? I mean, has he never opened his heart to you?"

"Certainly not."

"But, Papa, surely you suspect?"

The quartermaster laid down his knife and fork.

"Now, my girl, I won't have that. You can practise your pretty wiles on the boys as much as you like, but you are to leave Captain Hildebrand alone, see?"

Maud opened her eyes wide and looked very innocent.

"But, Papa, I never——"

"Oh, yes, you did. I say stop it."

He chuckled in a way that infuriated Maud, and went on with his dinner. William moved restlessly in his chair, aloof and supercilious. He disliked more than anything else the appearance of friendship into which his family had drifted with the whaling captain. After the meal he followed his father into the office below.

"Is it necessary, Papa, for us to receive this Hildebrand as our guest?"

"Is there any reason why we shouldn't, William? Have you anything against the man?"

"None of the other whaling captains presume to come. Bennet never does."

"Not because he hasn't been asked, but he has his wife and family waiting for him as soon as his boat gets in. If you don't think them good enough for us, my boy, let me tell you some of the finest men I've ever known were whalers. I don't blame you. You've learned your idea of whale-men

from this bay whaling along the coast here. That's cheap and easy and you can make quick money at it; but it's not whaling, it's pig-sticking. The deep-sea whaler is different, he's a man whatever else he may be."

"You heard Maud just now? Do you think it desirable for him to meet the girls on terms of friendship?"

The quartermaster laughed.

"Maud has an eye for every man she sees. Her pretty head is stuffed full of sentimental nonsense, but it's screwed on the right way, I'll be bound."

It was only Maud; the thought of Fanny never entered the head of either. But while Maud talked Fanny thought of Captain Hildebrand. He and the *Rosamund* had sailed again almost at once, hardly waiting for the necessary refitting of the boat. She thought of him in danger, and the thought was constantly with her.

"It is at me he looks, not at Maud for once," she thought, and the reflection was very pleasing.

When he came again after a shorter voyage to the East he brought Fanny a gift. They were standing for the moment alone by the entrance to the store. The captain opened his hand, and there on the palm lay a piece of coral, as red as a rose and a finger in length. It was perfectly smooth and branched to a fine reticulation, so that it was like a little magic tree.

"It is for you, Miss Fanny. I found it in the sea."

She had to take it off his palm, and it was warm with his holding it while he had waited for her to come. She was so happy in the gift that she could not show it even to Maud. She hid it in a box made of cedar of Lebanon, and guarded it as a secret and a love-token between them.

"By the way, Fanny, where is the coral Captain Hildebrand gave you?" inquired her father that evening, as she set the decanter before him after dinner. "He tells me it is very perfect, though not of much value. I'd like to see it if you have it handy."

"Oh," said Fanny, "the coral—I must have put it down somewhere. It is quite pretty."

As she left the room she was aware of Maud's hurt and

reproachful eyes following her. It was in her mind to break the coral, but she could not do it.

Before Captain Hildebrand had been gone three days Fanny was reconciled to her coral and to him. She found excuses for him, virtue even in his betrayal of their secret. In his modesty, he had never guessed that she would prize his gift so; he would naturally think she would show it to her sister, leave it perhaps lying about the house. In his fastidiousness, he would conceive it to be dishonourable to give her presents secretly, without her father's knowledge. Maud admired the coral immensely, but with unusual delicacy refrained from playing with it.

If Captain Hildebrand had not gone away and gone into unknown dangers, Fanny would never have fallen in love with him. It was in his absences that her love germinated. His danger was a more sustaining food than propinquity.

For part of the year the *Rosamund* went South, sometimes almost to the Antarctic Circle, and the crew were exposed to the dangers not only of hunting their quarry and of storms, but of floating ice as well. They suffered from the cold, and from the threat of starvation should their ship be driven out of its course in that barren sea. This might often happen, and the limited provisions that so light and speedy a boat as the *Rosamund* could carry would be exhausted before she could make port again. They had eaten raw whale flesh and moistened their cracked lips with dew, before this. Fanny had seen men come into port who were little more than skeletons and almost dehumanized by privation. They had stood in the courtyard below her window, rocking on their feet. Almost as bad as the privation was the loneliness, as day after day went by with no sign of land, no sail, sometimes not even a bird, only the sky and the sea and the wind, and at night, perhaps, the terrible splendour of the *aurora Australis*, like a warning from God. The southern voyages were the longest, the most dangerous, and the most profitable.

Sometimes the *Rosamund* sailed north-east, and the hard-bitten men who had stood the rigours of the Antarctic voyages were softened and loosened in the tropical winter

with its vivid, unchanging sun and brilliant sky and its breezes like warm honey. The sea was an aquarium, the land an aviary. There was little chance of starvation here, but sometimes the whole crew would be stricken with a tropical fever from drinking infected water, or a dysentery from eating alien fruits. In these seas, too, the whalers had to fear the dangers of typhoons which came unheralded from a clear sky and stripped the canvas from the masts almost in a moment. These voyages were not so long, and the men who returned from the islands were very different from the men who had returned from the South a few months before. They brought a sort of satiety and contempt with them. The home port seemed dingy and insipid, the temperate sunlight cold and thin. They would thrust the shells and corals and carved whale's teeth that they had brought indifferently upon their sweethearts, or would throw them into the harbour. The languishing, gaudy parrots that they had brought with them with ever-springing hopefulness, to die in a week of Sydney's winter, they would sell for a drink, which was all this poor perishable merchandise was worth.

The whalers' year fell thus into two different halves, but always they hunted the whale—and that is always dangerous. The whale-ships were the pioneers of the South Pacific, sailing uncharted seas and entering unknown harbours, and the whalers faced unbelievable dangers and endured unbelievable hardships almost as a commonplace of existence. It was little wonder that to Fanny a glamour surrounded the coarse, almost savage life of the whalers. These things were primitive, and it is the primitive things that appeal to a sophisticated world as romantic.

At night now Fanny no longer thought of the interior and its perils and rewards—it was always of the sea. She drove her imagination out after the *Rosamund*, thinking of Hildebrand's dangers with a sort of greed. She had never seen a whale, but it loomed in her mind as a monstrous and fabulous animal. "That leviathan," she called it, savouring the Biblical flavour of the word. She knew that when a whale had been captured, even a small one, it was too large to be taken on board the *Rosamund*, but the carcass was

moored to the side of the ship, and as quickly as possible, to save it from the sharks, it was cut up, the blubber stripped, and the precious oil and bone extracted. There was something orgiastic about the business—a gruesome heathen rite. Fanny could never bring herself to ask about it. She had seen the whaling spades, and they were melodramatic enough, the blade as wide as a man's open hand and as sharp as a razor. She had a picture of a prodigious, shapeless mass dripping blood into a reddened, churning sea, of black figures against the glare of lanterns, of a wild chanty going up to the stars, but she never permitted her imagination to come close, to see what they actually did. This deed of blood was part of Captain Hildebrand's black magic.

As the weeks went by Fanny's passion had little to sustain it, nothing but a piece of coral and the imponderable evidence of glances and chance contacts. They were tiny craft upon a five months' silence. Captain Hildebrand seemed entirely effaced from the world of the store. Even when Captain Bennet of the *Sure Hope* reported phenomenally bad weather in the South and returned after four months' hunting with a battered ship, a hungry crew, and no oil, no one seemed really anxious about the *Rosamund*.

"Nobody cares but me," Fanny told herself with a burning heart, and strained her ears for voices in the southerly gale that rattled her shutters.

CHAPTER III

WILLIAM

THE quartermaster was wrapped up in his new enterprise in flour-milling, and had bought two wagons and three teams of horses not only for carting the flour from the mill to the store and to other customers, but also for bringing in farm produce.

"I'm an impatient man," he explained to William, "and I like things when I want them, not a week later. If I fetch the things myself I save time and temper, and I see that the stuff's right before I take delivery. That's business, son," he concluded with considerable complacency.

George was to drive one wagon because he understood horses and could coax the unwieldy vehicle over bad roads when nine out of ten men would bog it. Since George had no business head, William was often sent with him. There was nowhere for him to sit but on the box by the driver, and it afflicted his pride sorely to be seen jolting along George Street and out on to the Parramatta Road on his father's wagon. When possible he invented business in town and joined George beyond the brickfields. Once out in the country the excursions were quite pleasant, provided the weather was not too hot or the roads too dusty. Sometimes, driving in the wake of a bullock team that blocked the whole road, they were almost suffocated with dust, or they had to draw to the side of the road to let one pass, with the same result. William became quite dexterous in finding reasons why he should not go out on market-days. Once in the country he thought the straggling farms far inferior to those he had known in England, the landscape untidy and monotonous, but the farmers received him civilly enough, and he proved himself a shrewd buyer of hay and brushwood,

lucerne, fruit, and the stocks of dairy produce that he brought back for the considerable household at the store. This success improved his relations with his father.

But a new humiliation was soon to be laid on William. The quartermaster conceived the brilliant idea of sending his wagons out laden and so collecting freight. On the days when the wagons were going out Jackie was sent to several of the stores in George and Pitt Streets whose proprietors the quartermaster knew, to ask what goods there were to deliver in the districts they would pass through. If there were not enough for two wagons it was always William's that carried the load because George was strong for the extra lifting. William now jolted out of town with a motley collection of agricultural implements, household oddments, furniture, and even foodstuffs rattling behind him. It not only spoiled his exit from town, but marred his entry into the country, for now he must appear before his clients in a most undignified guise.

One summer morning he was loading at Kent's furniture shop for a trip to Ryde. It was an exceptionally large load, and he had already been delayed long past his usual hour of departure, and was again delayed by the clumsiness and loquacity of Kent's man.

"Leave it to Joe, young master, Joe knows his business. I wasn't hostler at the George and Dragon for nothing. Packed the coaches, I did. Do you know why I left there? They put upon me. You've heard of the willing horse, haven't you? I said to the master, Mr Gilly that was, him that choked to death with a fish-bone—I said, 'You've no cause to put upon me, I didn't come out here at the Government's expense,' and he said to me——"

"For heaven's sake get on with the packing," cried William, in a fever. At this hour the better class people began to go about and he feared lest he should meet an acquaintance.

"All right, master, all right. I'm doing me best. You shouldn't hurry me. Gentleman as know nothing——"

"That will do," said William with decision.

Later, brooding over his humiliations, Kent's Joe reminded him of the Porter in *Macbeth*.

George cast an apprehensive eye upon the great pile of furniture behind them.

"It don't look too safe, Mr William," he grumbled.

"It'll do for the present. Drive on now; we can pull up later and fix them more securely."

George cautiously whipped up his horses, the edifice shook, but nothing happened. Immediately over William's head, like sinister mistletoe, was suspended a washstand. It was a rudimentary washstand in varnished pine. It had four legs and two shelves, a large circle being cut out of the upper shelf to hold the shallow enamel basin now resting in the bottom of the wagon. A thoroughly obscene washstand, William thought. He looked about fearfully for familiar faces and the broad smiles they would inevitably bear. Then his heart froze. Coming toward him he saw a familiar carriage, accompanied by a horseman. He recognized it at once as the Gillam equipage, and the horseman as Mr Humphrey Gillam, though why they should be out at such an hour and driving toward their home he was at a loss to understand.

It was indeed the Misses Gillam and their brother. They had attended a party out of town the night before, had spent the night with their host, and were now hastening home to prepare for new gaieties.

"Whip them up," cried William, "and turn off into Park Street."

George obeyed, and the horses responded with a will. The wagon pitched and tossed on the uneven road and the furniture creaked and rocked. The carriage came on apace. They were almost abreast as the wagon swerved into Park Street. The swerve was the last straw. The self-control of the washstand gave way, and it precipitated itself upon William. By a perverse miracle his head passed through the hole, and the piece of furniture, falling with considerable force, wedged itself on his shoulders.

"Oh my!" cried Miss Phœbe, the youngest of the Gillams, and clapped her hand over her mouth.

"Drive on," shouted William, whose major passion nothing could subdue.

But George had already pulled up the horses, and with characteristic deliberation was making the reins fast. The carriage stopped, Mr Humphrey dismounted and came running to the rescue.

"If you'd just help me get him down, sir. I can't do nothing up here."

Between them they got the helpless victim to the road. Already quite a crowd had collected, and comments and advice were not lacking.

"Better get an axe and chop him out," some one advised.

"Vot!" cried the Jew tailor. "Vud you spoil the lovely washhand-stand?"

"Aren't I the lucky woman?" exclaimed a fat lady in a shawl; "it's the second accident I've seen this week."

"'E won't be much 'urt," said her pessimistic companion. "It's not properly speaking an accident at all."

"Reminds me of our Rover when he got his head stuck in a tin."

"My dear fellow, how deuced awkward!" Humphrey condoled. "Hope we're not hurting you. If you'll pull the washstand, George, I'll hold his legs."

They did.

"Easy does it!" encouraged an onlooker.

"Pull, boys, pull! You'd think he was a blooming cracker. It'd be funny like if he busted in the middle."

George pulled. Willing and grimy hands were laid upon William's buff breeches. The washstand yielded. George sat down upon the hard road, William upon his supporters. A cheer rose.

"How do you do, Mr Hyde?" trilled Miss Phœbe, with ready tact, anxious to cover her earlier crudity.

"How do you do?" fluted Miss Evelina.

"How do you do?" piped Miss Claire.

"I trust you are uninjured?" inquired Miss Adelaide's languid contralto.

William bowed stiffly.

"I thank you, ladies, for your solicitude. I was incommoded, but am unhurt."

The gentlemen exchanged bows.

"I beg you will accept my heartfelt thanks for your kind assistance," said William, murder in his heart.

"Don't mention it, my dear fellow. Delighted, I'm sure."

George, with rare sympathy and insight, cuffed a little boy of the lesser sort who stood gaping in the gutter.

"Pray excuse me," said William, hardly knowing how to terminate the scene. It was high time it was terminated, for the cumbersome wagon partly blocked the road and the Gillam carriage and the crowd did so entirely. William feverishly assisted George to readjust the load. Humphrey approached confidentially.

"Pray remember me to your charming sisters."

As William finally jolted away he looked back longingly at the cemetery.

William was so deeply mortified by this occurrence that he refused to go out into society at all, and thereby forfeited Maud's sympathy. He did not mention the incident at home, but it leaked out nevertheless.

"You might have told us," said Maud reproachfully. The quartermaster laughed uproariously. Had the accident happened to himself he would have told the tale with relish to all and sundry, and he did not see why William should be sensitive about it. The men in the yard sniggered. A gutter poet even made a song about it and bawled it in William's hearing.

Nor did he get much sympathy from Fanny.

"You were not hurt, William, and I'm sure by all accounts Mr Humphrey was most helpful and friendly. I cannot see why anyone should think the less of you for a pure accident."

"But, Fanny, I have become the laughing-stock of Sydney."

"Don't be silly," cried Fanny in exasperation. "You're not as important as you think. Every one will have forgotten in a week."

And that was all the comfort he got. He was still expected to go out with the wagon, and this was purgatory, but Benjamin Shirley was able to point out to the quartermaster, with all a flatterer's pleasure, that he was more than paying for the upkeep of the wagons by the freights he collected.

William's ill-temper became a burden upon the whole family. The quartermaster could no longer ignore his discontent. He had brought his family up on the theory that women and children were strange creatures, but would get over anything if you took no notice of them. He could out-stay mere youth on any track, and so far his children had always come to see reason without any unnecessary conversation, by dint of being left strictly to themselves.

William, however, was not yielding to the strong, silent treatment. He was now, the quartermaster reflected, probably sufficiently mature to be reasoned with. He would apply to him his second rule of conduct which he kept for men; he would "have it out with him."

As William stood idly throwing stones into the water one Sunday afternoon the quartermaster came up and clapped him on the shoulder. William automatically "wished he wouldn't do that" and threw another stone into the water.

"You'd better get it off your chest, my boy."

"What, Papa?" asked William, with a sinking heart. Often as he had rehearsed his grievances, he found himself at a loss before a direct attack.

"You're going round like a mute at a funeral and making us all damned uncomfortable with your sulks. What's the matter with you? Been getting into scrapes?"

"Of course not, Papa."

"Oh, well, no offence meant, my dear boy, but boys used to be boys when I was young. Come, you'd better tell me. You're not brooding over that spill you had the other day, are you?"

"Of course not; I'd almost forgotten the unfortunate occurrence."

"Well!" The quartermaster was becoming impatient, and with difficulty curbed a temptation to shake William. "If you won't tell me I can't do anything for you, can I?"

"I'm not happy here, Papa, and I don't think it is fair to the girls or to me to keep us in this place."

"Don't like the store, eh?"

"No. I—I——" How could he say, "I think it is vulgar and rough and a constant wound to my refinement?"

It would be like telling the quartermaster that he was vulgar and rough himself. "I don't think it's a suitable home for my sisters."

"We can leave the girls out of this," said the quartermaster dryly. "They are quite happy. It's you we are interested in this afternoon. What's wrong with the store? It's not the Battery; is that it?"

"It's a bad neighbourhood. All the decent people have left it, and, living over the business like any shopkeeper, we never have a chance to meet people."

"And the nasty smell of the oil, William, and your papa in his shirt-sleeves?"

William blushed hotly.

"It's all right, my dear boy, I'm not sensitive. Go on."

"I've nothing more to say."

"Oh, yes, you have—you're like a woman who keeps back some of the housekeeping bills. They all have to be paid in the end."

"I'm twenty-one, Papa. I work for you, I'm your son, but you never give me your confidence. Benjamin Shirley knows more of the business than I do. I have to go out with the wagon to be a laughing-stock. You never take my tastes into consideration."

William was beginning to find his feet, and was pleased to feel a glow of defiance running through him. The quartermaster surveyed him without heat.

"I would have given you my confidence if you had wanted it. You have not been very encouraging, William. I had hoped for something different. Seems to me you want things both ways. You accuse me in the same breath of dragging you into the business and of keeping you out of it. I'm willing to make you my partner, I'll write 'and Son' up there after my name if you're willing. But if you come in you've got to take an interest, you've got to put your whole heart and soul into it. I'll expect you to work as hard as I do, and you've got to be proud of it. It's not decent nor honest to sniff at your bread-and-butter, and you'll not go on sniffing in my house. If sniffing's what you really want, you can sniff elsewhere."

"I don't understand you."

"I'll make myself clear. I'm giving you the choice—as you say, you are twenty-one. Heaven knows I *want* you to grow up. You can come into the business as an equal if you're willing to give it your best—no reservations, mind—or you can go right out of it. Now don't get any dramatic notion into your head that I'm casting you off. I'll set you up in anything in reason. You can go back to England if you like, your uncle will take you back into his counting-house, I've no doubt. I'd be disappointed and you'd be a fool, but I won't stop you being a fool if you want to be—— Now, look here, William, for months I've been waiting for you to come to your senses. I've never before seen anyone take so long to find out on which side his bread was buttered. I don't think you'd ever find out, not if I left you for ten years. If you go back to England what will you be? A clerk in your uncle's counting-house—and in ten years' time you'll still be a clerk. Your uncle has got boys of his own, and he'll put them over your head. You might go to another counting-house, you might get on, but you've not much capital. I can't afford you much for the next few years, and you're not a genius. Genteel drudgery for the rest of your life—very nice, very respectable, confoundedly dull."

The quartermaster had edged William against a wall, and in his earnestness drove home his points with his forefinger on William's waistcoat. William found this so irritating that he could hardly give attention to what his father was saying.

"And you wouldn't drop into a fat thing here when I'd gone. I wouldn't give you a business you didn't care for, to make a mess of—I'd give partnerships to the girls' husbands as a dowry, if I liked them, and they'd have the whole thing after me. Is that clear, William?"

"Perfectly clear, Papa."

"If you stay—well, haven't you ever thought of the prospects here? The place is seething with opportunity. I can't sleep at night for thinking of them—popping up all over the place like weevils in a biscuit. Australia's rich, we don't even know how rich she is yet, and all the riches will

come down to the man on the waterfront, it'll pour through our hands. The wheat and the wool and perhaps gold too —pouring out through our hands into the veins of the world. Sydney will be a fountain of wealth. The farmers and the merchants will make her, between them. England is pot-bound, God bless her!"

William's unresponsiveness became apparent here even to the quartermaster. He had wished for his son's companionship in his romantic optimism; but since he was himself embarrassed by, rather than proud of, his streak of idealism, he could scarcely blame William for not sharing it. The young man's imperviousness appealed to him as admirable restraint and strength even while it disappointed him by its stupidity and blindness.

He shifted his ground, and tapping the unresponsive chest in another place went on:

"We're doing well now, presently we'll do better. Look at other men who began where we did. Look at old Gillam —twenty years ago he hadn't five hundred pounds; now he's one of the richest men in Sydney. What he could do I can do. Some day you'll be a richer man than Master Humphrey because I'm not frittering away my money on foolish display. He's wasting his wealth more than he knows because he's not bringing up his son to it. Young Humphrey will settle down to be a gentleman on the proceeds. I won't have you do that. What's the good of building a business if it's not going to last? It's not only money to be spent, boy; we owe a duty to our property, and I'm not going to hand mine to a do-nothing even if he is my only son. I'll not have solid gain thrown away on tiddly-winking gentility. Have I made myself plain?"

"Yes, Papa, very."

" Do you see now which side your bread's buttered?"

"Yes, Papa."

"Have I been fair?"

"Yes."

"Don't say yes if you don't think it. You haven't been straight with me before, and this is your last chance."

"You've no right to say that, Papa."

"Yes I have. You've not been what I call straight in a lot of ways. Over coming here—if you didn't want to come why didn't you say so, why didn't you refuse? Or if you didn't want to come but thought you ought to, or were afraid of missing something if you didn't, why didn't you come cheerfully? You came and you sulked. Wanting it both ways again. Why do you sulk when you don't get what you want? It's honester to have it out. I'd never penalize a boy for having guts. You ought to know that. You wanted to shilly-shally and get out of talking to me this afternoon. Eh! didn't you? Answer me now."

"It hasn't been a very pleasant conversation, has it?"

"Pleasant! Why ever should it be—we were having it out, weren't we?"

William felt very unhappy. His father's reasoning fell on him with sledge-hammer blows. While he listened to him he could not but agree. He was a righteous young man; it was as dear to him to be in the right as to get what he wanted. It therefore hurt him bitterly to have his foundations of martyrdom shot away from under him. His unhappiness and distaste for his life in Sydney remained with him, but his sense of injustice was shaken. It is hard to do without a sense of injustice when you have got used to one. But William was no fool; he was a poor judge of men, but he knew that his father was steadfast and would keep his word. He was sufficiently his father's son to know that in the last resort he would not sacrifice the substance for the shadow. He was on the way to being a cold, formal, stilted man, and the qualities of this type were beginning to unfold in him—justice, restraint, and an honourable but not impulsive generosity. Therefore he was wounded rather by the form than by the matter of his father's harangue. He was not so overcome by disgust of the present as to be unable to appraise the future. He had been all along maladroit and unhappy rather than sulky and ill-natured, but he could not and did not expect his father to understand such subtlety. He knew now that he must accept the quartermaster's terms and accept them with what grace he could. His father's bluff emotionalism acted as an astringent upon his

pride. He must, he felt, behave like a gentleman toward his father. All these things informed his answer. It was not the conventional flower of eloquence that he could have wished, but it was the best he could manage at the time.

"I have listened to all you have to say, Papa, and I am convinced of the soundness of your arguments—I see that I should blight my future if I returned to England now, though I admit that I find life in Sydney, as we live it, uncongenial, and the separation from my *fiancée* is hard to bear. Papa, I accept your terms, your very generous terms, and will devote my energies henceforth to the extension of our business."

The grace of this reply was not particularly apparent to the quartermaster. It chilled him and he thought, "The young cub's to be bought," and looked at him with a sudden suspicion that died a natural death within the second. "Cold as a fish," he reflected. But he was clapping William on the shoulder and saying, "My dear fellow, I knew you'd be reasonable—now we can discuss the details."

William drooped—discussion was hardly the name for the quartermaster's method of conversation, and he had had enough.

The quartermaster began in businesslike tones:

"First of all, living at the store. You don't like it, but it's necessary. I've got to supervise everything that is done, and how'd I be doing that if we were down at the Battery? Even if we could afford it. Must be on the spot, that's the first thing in business. The place is a bit rough, I know that, and we'll move some day. Believe me, William, you exaggerate. Nobody cares where you live here. If you can do your work and make your pile, you're all right. If you hold up your head no one will look down on you. Don't be chicken-hearted, boy. You're as good as anyone else."

William was not so heartened by this information as he should have been. He saw that he was going to lose on every count.

"I'm not going to be unreasonable—we'll move when the business allows it."

"Vague, very vague," thought William.

"And about your marriage. I don't want to stand in your light. Send for the little lady and get married in—let's say eighteen months' time. Will she wait for you, eh?"

"Yes—but, Papa, I—I—couldn't bring Adela here. Think of what she has been accustomed to."

"Stuff and nonsense! If the girl loves you she'll come. You're not asking her to put up with anything your sisters don't have to bear. There's plenty of everything here, isn't there?" The quartermaster was really in a huff this time.

"But Adela is not used to anything like this. She has had such a sheltered life."

"Then," thundered the quartermaster, "she's not the wife for a store-keeper! Write and tell her what it is like—or what you think it is like—and let her make up her mind. If she doesn't like it you can find a good sensible wife that will. But you can tell her from me that she's not to come here and *then* grizzle."

"Really, Papa, I can't have you talking of my *fiancée* like that."

"She's only a woman, William." Would he never break through? "Well, well, do as you like, of course. Now, then, the wagon. What's your grievance?"

William said, "I do not like appearing in public on a wagon loaded with furniture and other things," and felt like a little boy.

"But I don't ask you to drive the wagon, William, or do anything menial."

"It wouldn't be any worse if I did drive it."

"But it's our wagon—you go out as your father's factor—every one knows that."

William shuffled—each found the other incredibly dense.

"Your uncle's customers used to see you sitting on a high stool in his counting-house. Were you ashamed of that?"

"No, it was different."

"I can't see it."

"People laugh."

"Let 'em laugh. You won't get a washstand on your head again in a hurry."

William winced. "I do believe," thought the quartermaster, "that that is what he minds most of all."

Aloud he said, "Is it the washstand or the wagon you mind?"

"Really I'd forgotten that silly affair. If people were malicious enough to laugh at my misfortune, it cannot be helped."

"Well, it's a pity you don't like the wagon, it pays well."

"Money!" cried William bitterly. "Am I nothing?"

The quartermaster made a practice of ignoring dramatic questions. Instead he said now with the heartiness of a benefactor:

"My dear boy, I'm glad to have all this settled. Tomorrow you can go through the books with Benjamin, and when you've mastered the business—say in six months' time—the attorney can draw up the deed of partnership. Come in and have a tot of rum."

But William wouldn't—he wanted to get away and count the cost. The quartermaster after so much unaccustomed eloquence was badly in need of a stimulant, and he was not a man to drink alone. He called old Libby, and they went into the store together.

William went to his room. Maud had been an interested spectator of the interview, from her upstairs window.

"What can Papa be saying to William?" she cried to an apathetic Fanny. "William's as red as a turkey cock and Papa's laying down the law all over his chest. I wonder if he has done anything. It's not very likely, is it?"

When William re-entered the house she ran out to meet him, but he slipped into his room and shut the door crisply in her face. So Maud returned empty to the boredom of her embroidery frame and Fanny's unsisterly preoccupation.

William sat on the edge of his bed and realized that he had burnt his boats.

II

In the room that had heard so much of his grievances, on the bed whose pillows he had thumped in moments of rage and disgust, William reviewed the situation. He could

think more clearly out of his father's presence than in it. The older man's vitality dazzled him, it drew him like a magnet, against his will and beneath his knowledge. It made him feel young and empty. He always felt at a subtle disadvantage in the presence of the quartermaster, and that was the score of his hostility toward him. Yet nothing would have made him happier than to win his father's admiration. Sometimes he rehearsed in his imagination some gallant gesture that would save his father's body or pride or purse from disaster. But in the quartermaster's presence these dreams withered into grotesqueness.

During the conversation all that his father had said seemed to have the force of reason, even when distasteful. The case he had built up had broken like a gossamer and floated away. He hadn't even put it. He hadn't been able to find it to put. Now his mind slipped into its old groove, his arguments came flooding back, his case looked impregnable. He had given everything and received nothing in return save what should have been his by right. His father offered him a partnership, but on his own terms and only after a humiliating probation of six months. His father had summarily disposed of all his complaints. Everything, he saw clearly, would go on just as before, only now he had bound himself not to disagree, not to complain, not even to take refuge in silence and melancholy. As an only son, a son who had never given his father just cause for complaint by extravagance or wildness, it was his natural human right to be that father's partner and heir. The quartermaster had no right to sell it back to him. After all what was the partnership—the wonderful partnership with which he had been bought? What would any partnership with that man be? He would be no better off than now except in name. Every day would be like to-day. He would be no more than a straw on the vast current of his father's energies. He would be talked down, bluffed, spiritually coerced with mere physical energy. He was a poor, miserable creature and abominably treated.

Yet, looking back, England and the old life seemed to have shrunk, and even Adela seemed a little further off. At

least he would remain a hero to Adela, she should not come out till he had consolidated his position. He would say nothing to her about joining him. Her parents would never consent, and she was not yet twenty-one—three years yet before there was any question of her coming. How sweet and peaceful it was to love this beautiful shadowy girl over the water. How pure and pale his love burnt in his heart now—safe from jarring reality and the uncertainty of human intercourse! He would always, always be faithful to Adela—even if he never saw her again.

III

The next week was a very busy one, the stables were full of horses, an overdue boat was in and had to be unloaded and loaded as speedily as possible. The work went on all night as well as all day, some of the men working sixteen hours at a stretch. The quartermaster himself did not seem to sleep. He enjoyed the excitement, directing every operation and shouting down the noise of the winches. Torches flared all night in the courtyard, and between fatigue and the liberal supply of stimulants the workers were all half drunk long before morning, and the loading took on something of the appearance of an orgy as it might be depicted in an old dark wood engraving. The girls could not sleep for the glare and the noise, and became infected with the excitement. Fanny rose very early and made a great urn of tea and cut Gargantuan rounds of bread and butter for all comers.

They were so busy that William could not be spared to go into the country with the wagon, so George went alone, sleeping soundly through the turmoil of the night and jogging off in the morning quite unaffected by the general excitement. William and Benjamin superintended the loading and checked the items off on the tally lists, relieving each other every four hours. So for three days William had no time to think. He could not but admire his father in action. Competence was a clean, neat thing that he loved as you might love a work of art, and it satisfied

him to feel, under the noise and apparent confusion, the steady and efficient accomplishment of the task, a world of order issuing out of chaos. He, like his father, had a *flair* for the shipshape, and that alone made possible the partnership of these incompatibles.

On the fourth morning the wharves were clear, and Jem was busy sweeping out the stables. Every one but the quartermaster was suffering a reaction. That redoubtable attacked his bacon and eggs in the spirit of Alexander conquering another world. Fanny, with her best 'business as usual' expression, poured out coffee. Maud was nearly asleep.

"Holiday for every one to-day," announced the quartermaster. "There's just one thing I'd like you to look to before you go, William. I bought one of the horses myself as a spec.—I'd like your opinion of her."

"I don't know much about horses, sir," said William, faintly flattered under his fatigue.

"Still, I'd like to know what you think of her—last box on the far side," he called after the retreating figure. The quartermaster was in the best of humours, he never outgrew his pleasure in surprises. He could not wait for William to return, but left the table and went out into the courtyard.

"Well, what do you think of her?" he shouted as soon as the boy emerged from the stables.

"She's a beautiful creature, sir. May I ask what you gave for her?"

"You may not. She's a present, a present for you. I'll have my son travel like a gentleman."

"For me, Papa!"—for the last time in his life William felt an impulse to fling his arms round his father's neck, but he could only blush and stammer, "I—I—deeply appreciate your kindness. Thank you—thank you very much."

"That's all right, my dear boy," broke in the quartermaster. "If you're satisfied, so am I," and off he stumped, leaving William high and dry.

So the beautiful bay mare, with the white fleck on her forehead for which they called her Star, was added to the

prestige of the rising house of Hyde, and became a beloved member of the waterside community.

Peace fell upon the store. The quartermaster settled down to forty winks with a red bandana over his face to keep off the flies. Benjamin fell asleep among his papers with his head upon his outflung arm, and even the thought of Maud was, for the time, expunged from his mind. Star looked out on a hushed and deserted courtyard and thought long, equine thoughts. William went to his room, and the girls lay down to rest. The work and excitement had done them all good. All had a sense of accomplishment.

Maud fell asleep at once. No male heart could possibly have withstood the appeal of Maud asleep. Sleep was the loveliest of all her coquetries.

Fanny lay down too, but did not sleep. She was pleasantly relaxed. How strange it was to be lying down at ten o'clock in the morning. It was like being convalescent after an illness—to be here so at peace. She felt like clear water. She could no longer imagine storms and disasters, the only picture she could conjure up was a long black boat on a sapphire sea, scudding north and home.

"He is coming home," cried her heart; "I know that he is coming home now. However far apart we are I shall always know when he is coming back to me."

All day and for days to come she watched, with the eyes of her heart, the black boat sailing north.

CHAPTER IV

FANNY

IMPORTANT things were happening to Fanny. Almost everything that happened to her in the years of her making was important, just as nothing that happened to Maud ever seemed important at all, because it happened so easily and naturally. Fanny was used now to being in love. Every day cemented it deeper into her heart. Having no other ground to root in, it rooted in herself, and having taken this sudden miraculous passion for granted she began steadily and quietly to build her life upon it. It did not seem strange to her that she should love a man she hardly knew, who lived a desperate sort of life outside her small world, any more than faith seems strange to the devotee. Fanny loved by faith. The angel—or the enemy—having once been admitted behind her barricades of reserve, her common sense, her humour, her total lack of sentimentality, all the qualities that had kept her immune from the gossamer affairs that were Maud's daily bread, made its position impregnable. Fanny had strength to protect a love that would soon have been ousted by new conquerors from the open city that was Maud. Sentimentality is smoke in passion's flame. It betrays and clouds. Fanny's love made no smoke. Her life was as full of 'ifs' as any woman's. If she had not been so restricted, if her really considerable powers of mind and character had been given scope, Fanny would not have fallen a victim to the first colourful stranger she met. She had less and less to do, the household was fast becoming a little community and the quartermaster more and more usurped its management. Even the marketing had been largely taken from her, as it was found more businesslike to buy direct from the farmers.

The deep change in Fanny showed itself in many little ways that only Maud noticed. The feeling that Maud's fluctuations had always given her, that she was herself invulnerable, was gone now. She felt strong but brittle, plastic with a core of superhuman strength. Fanny was interested in herself. She began to think about herself, and, as was inevitable, to compare herself with Maud. Her attitude to her sister changed subtly. She had never forgotten that she was the elder sister. There was a deep and close affection between them, but Fanny had always assumed an air of guardianship. Maud had always made her feel serene and competent, and, perhaps out of a quite unconscious streak of jealousy, she had always stressed Maud's "flightiness." She had rather ostentatiously left vanity to Maud, was careful not to compete with her. Now Maud seemed less of a child to her, Maud who had been in love so often. Fanny would have liked to talk to her, but was too shy. For the first time she felt young and inexperienced, and unable to take herself for granted any longer.

Sometimes in the oval mirror between the two candles she would catch a fleeting glimpse of herself that seemed new and surprising. She would bend forward to stare at herself, and it would be gone—the hint of colour and music that she had so nearly surprised by candlelight. A malicious person might have summed Fanny up as a thin, pale girl, and it would have been an accurate but most misleading description. Thin she was, but with a sort of delicate, gallant strength in the carriage of her shoulders, and her skin was pale without being fair. For all her slimness and pallor, she never impressed anyone as being bloodless. Her hair was dark and cloudy without being lack-lustre, just as her skin was pale without being fair. Her cheek-bones were too high for beauty, her eyes of a very dark grey, direct and hard. The unconscious softness of youth and inexperience still concealed the strong, definite lines of her features. She had good looks, but not of Maud's type—and Maud's type was fashionable; Maud's brown curls, big brown eyes, and brilliant complexion always haunted Fanny when she gazed at herself in the glass, and took all the lustre from her

own less obvious charms. Still, there came the comforting assurance, "He does not even look at Maud, he sees that she is only a child and has nothing to give him but a pretty face. Maud will have to marry a rich man because she is so extravagant and fond of clothes and gadding. But I should not care if I never went to a party again, or never had a silk dress all my life. I should not mind how hard my life was if only I could go with him."

II

Fanny's hand was light upon Maud in these days. When they went for the daily constitutional, it took little cunning on Maud's part to steer their course toward the barracks, the Mecca of Sydney's youth and beauty. Fanny had been very firm about the barracks; it did not seem to her at all becoming that they should be seen there often. Maud would be marched reluctant but still talkative to view the architectural splendours of the Battery, or up Flagstaff Hill, which she certainly did not find as inspiring as her father had done. The barracks were never mentioned, but sooner or later Maud found it imperative to purchase a skein of silk in the dangerous neighbourhood or to look at a bonnet displayed in a window close by. She would boldly announce the necessity of going "into town" at the breakfast-table, and generally spent the morning with the flat-iron. Fanny was not unaffected by the gaiety of their departure for the barracks at two o'clock. Maud would wear perhaps her white organdie, ruffled to the waist, the little bodice formed by a fichu fastened with a cameo brooch. Over her shoulders fell her fine silk shawl with an embossed pattern, which Papa had brought her from India when he was on the *Intrepid*. She wore a bonnet of Milan straw, high-crowned and wide-brimmed, her face framed by its ruches of blonde lace and flowers, broad, cherry ribbons fastening it beneath her chin. One mittened hand held a minute chiffon parasol, the other her black silk reticule with the bead-work. As they moved the curious—and there were many such—might glimpse pantalets frilled with fine lace,

lace stockings, and a bright shoe-buckle under the hem of her frock. Fanny beside her in yellow muslin, a massive gold brooch like a shield on her bosom, and a feather tipped with brown curling round her bonnet, did not look nearly as strict as she thought she was. But Maud knew she had a core of iron.

Maud did not resent her sister's tutelage, she accepted it as a part of life. Attractive young females were equipped by heaven with stern relatives, it was part of the game. A *duenna* was a necessary *rôle* in any comedy. She not only provided a foil for her charge, but introduced the complications that made a flirtation really interesting. To Maud Romance *in excelsis* was the intrigue of an Eastern princess with an unknown gallant through bars of moonlight. She bore Fanny no grudge for her unremitting watchfulness. She loved her dearly, but feared for her sister much more than Fanny feared for her. To Maud twenty-three seemed a sinister age for an unmarried girl, high up and perilously near the shelf that was Maud's conception of hell.

At two o'clock precisely they left the store. It was fine and bright and the rocks, as they walked up Windmill Street toward the steps that would lift them to a higher level, gave off considerable heat. This was the third time in one week that Fanny had allowed Maud to edit the constitutional, and, emboldened, Maud had not even invented an excuse. She was happy and excited and talked incessantly. Not even the steps could stop her.

"What do you think, Fanny? I just heard Papa asking the Giles' to dinner. Mr Giles was in the office, and he happened to mention that he had brought his family to town and they were staying the night at the Royal. Papa asked them all to dinner. I shouldn't have known only I was just coming down the stairs as he spoke. Isn't it provoking?"

"Why did you not tell me before?" cried Fanny. "Now I'll just have to go straight back. It is too bad of Papa not to let me know."

"No, indeed. The stuffed mutton is quite good enough, and Papa can open a bottle of wine."

Fanny hesitated, then resumed her walk with determination. "I'll get a seed cake at the confectioner's," she conceded to hospitality. "Is Euphemia coming?"

"Of course Euphemia is coming. And William will have to entertain her."

"Poor William!"

"She will think he is making love to her no matter what he says. It really is too delicious to see William struggling to find something safe to talk about. Last time he asked her if she had been to St Phillip's lately and talked about the service so piously, but Euphemia only simpered and said, 'I know you naughty men; you only go to church to ogle us poor females.' Every one stopped eating and looked at them, and of course poor William blushed, and Mrs Giles said, 'What *are* you saying to my little girl, Mr William?' I thought I'd have died, but William could not see that it was amusing."

Maud began to laugh, and her little parasol wobbled with her glee.

"Pray remember where we are," cried Fanny, looking about her apprehensively. To get from Windmill Street to the town the girls were traversing one of the wildest parts of Sydney. They had, it is true, the choice of two respectable thoroughfares, but tacitly preferred the spice of adventure to be found in the Rocks to the dusty and mundane respectability of Kent or George Street. The Rocks was not exactly a slum at the time, but it was a disreputable area where the foreign sailors congregated and the roughs of the city had their lairs. It had been allowed to run wild. Crazy streets zigzagged up the cliffs, ending in nothing, and flights of uncertain steps led from level to level. Cottages and terraces littered the ground in wild disarray, turning fronts, backs, and sides indiscriminately to the street. A public-house stood on every corner, dark lanes led to perdition. By day it was quiet enough; a brooding quiet like scum lay over the dirty, untidy place, but after dark the evil and exotic life that was tidied away by day behind its blistered doors, came out to prowl. Terraces seething with life, huddled now in outward repose. Many of the

houses were owned by Chinese. They may have been opium-dens or not, for a Chinaman who does not run an opium-den looks just as sinister as one who does. As many foreigners as Englishmen were to be met there—negroes, Spaniards, Portuguese, Lascars, Scandinavians. Occasionally, even early in the day, there would be a drunken man on the pavement outside one of the taverns. Maud would veil her eyes and Fanny stare in front of her. But for the most part doors were shut and curtains drawn, and the streets were empty save for a few children, or perhaps a pedlar with his wares in a filthy perambulator, an old woman going out for a jug of beer, or a girl in curl-rags and dirty finery who after dark would blossom into a Messalina of the slums. The Rocks was very horrid, but rather thrilling—and in this place Maud had laughed aloud.

She was sobered, but not silenced. "Poor Euphemia," she sighed. "She must be thirty if a day. I don't imagine she can ever have had a *beau*. No wonder she is desperate!"

"No wonder!" cried Fanny, and peered down the terrible pit that a few months ago would have looked no more than a ditch to her. Thirty and unloved!

"I am sure Mrs Giles's magenta gown would scare the young men away, and Mr Giles is very tiresome too, is he not? But that's just as well, because if he were smart Papa would not always get his own way in the flour-mill, and that would be a pity. Benjamin says Papa is a wonderful business man, and he ought to know. Papa has a share in Captain Bennet's boat now, Fanny, did you know? He didn't make anything on his last voyage, only debts, and the boat had to be repaired and everything. So Papa said, 'I'll buy a share in the *Sure Hope* with all the money you owe,' and now Papa will get half of everything the *Sure Hope* makes. Isn't it easy, Fanny? Of course, Benjamin says Captain Bennet won't be able to sell his oil to anyone else or buy even a nail at another store. And if the *Rosamund* doesn't have a good trip this time she'll belong altogether to Papa. Is it not strange, Fanny, to think of Captain Hildebrand owing Papa money? He looks as if he had a chest of gold under his bed, and it is so humiliating to owe

people money. I wonder what he did with all he got for the ambergris."

"Really, Maud, it is no concern of ours," said Fanny stiffly, though it comforted her heart to hear his name.

"But it is peculiar, Fanny. I cannot imagine what he would spend it on. You cannot spend money in the Southern Ocean, can you? We do not know a bit what he does ashore although you might say we are his friends. Can you think what he would look like borrowing money? He doesn't look as if he could, he's so reckless and independent and proud. Benjamin says that he'd rather sink his ship than come back as Captain Bennet did, because then he'd be broke."

"Oh, no!" cried Fanny, and then to cover her confusion she began to scold Maud. "You shouldn't encourage Mr Shirley to talk about private affairs. I am surprised that he should do so."

"But we must talk about something; he really is a little difficult, he's so modest, and Papa's affairs are the only things he can be interesting about. I don't see why I shouldn't know. Papa never said I wasn't to. You like to know, too."

"But about Benjamin—you do lead him on, Maud."

"It makes the poor boy so happy to talk to me. He's had a sad life, what with his papa and mamma not being all they should be. You needn't be afraid," cried Maud with a toss of her head, "that he'll take any liberties. He is too modest for words—not like some people I know. Oh, my love, I nearly died in church yesterday. It was quite a scene. I am sure I wished you were there to protect me."

"What did you do?" cried Fanny, in consternation.

"I didn't do anything. I simply sat in the pew behind Humphrey Gillam, and do you know what the wretch did? He drew a big heart on the fly-leaf of his prayer-book, with H.G. on it, and an arrow sticking in it with the blood pouring out, and M.H. on the arrow. When we sang a hymn he held his book so that I could not help seeing it. Miss Phœbe saw too, and choked. She said she had swallowed a peppermint, and she had to keep on choking till

Miss Evelina led her out. Mrs Gillam suspected something and rapped Humphrey with her fan. Yes, right there in church; wasn't it mortifying? Papa woke up and said, 'What's this? What's this?' quite loud. People turned round and stared. Oh, dear!"

"What an odious young man Mr Humphrey is!" said Fanny shrewdly.

"Oh, no, Fanny, he is not; he has the nicest legs in Sydney. His mamma is, though. I don't know how he tolerates her constant prying and pecking. You don't really think him odious, Fanny, do you?"

They were nearing the barracks now, and Maud's eyes were very lively, appraising the gowns of the women, and fluttering past them to the glint of red where the soldiers paraded in Barrack Square. A shimmer of heat that was like a breath of excitement rose from the paving-stones. The streets were full, gentlemen in top-hats and blue coats on horseback, ladies in open carriages with their gay little parasols taking the air, girls on the pavement with their faces toward the barrack square. It was the hour of parade. The toilers were at work, the sad and weary had stayed at home and pulled down the blinds against the summer glare. Only the young, the happy, those who had something to display, were abroad. There was a sparkle in the air. Fanny stiffened to it a little, Maud relaxed.

Maud bowed right and left. How did she get to know people? Fanny knew few of them, yet they were always together. Maud kept up a running whisper of comment—young ladies did whisper then, it was one of their wiles.

"Oh, look, Fanny, isn't he magnificent? No, no, that one over there, stroking his whiskers. Who can he be? Let us catch up to Mrs Cleaver, perhaps she'll know him. There, why didn't you hurry? Mrs Morgan's snapped her up—Judy Morgan's wearing a ring, who can it be? Oh, Fanny, how naughty of you! I do love soldiers, don't you? My, Mrs Bruce shouldn't wear green, some one ought to tell her."

Fanny liked the barracks too. The gaiety infected her, but she always believed that she went merely to chaperon

Maud. It was later than usual when they returned home. The sun was setting and gentle tranquillity was closing in over the streets. A wave of unreality was come up out of the sea, and the town was a-wash with it. There was a cool, light breeze that mocked their muslin frocks and blew Maud's ribbons out before her. Behind them the sky was pink, before them a serene nothingness. Here and there windows glittered in the last of the sun, and it all glowed with a false clarity, rather like the clarity that comes just before sleep. Sepia shadows were gathering in lanes and alleys, and doorways were cavernous. It was the time of day when colour wanes and form obsesses. The houses of the Rocks massed and huddled. They serrated the quiet sky with the pattern of their chimneys and roofs. Night and day were equally at bay. There was a balance that might hold for ever. But the Rocks were beginning to stir. In upper chambers girls leaned between candles to rouge their pale cheeks, the tinsel glamour of their finery awakening as they moved. In back rooms children were being bustled out of the way. Sailors, home from the sea, lounging the day away, woke from their apathy, and every corner with its public-house and warm glow of lamps sent out its magnetism. The girls were on Tom Tiddler's ground, and should have fluttered home with all possible speed.

"We ought to hurry," said Maud, without conviction.

"Katie can manage," said Fanny, with unusual complacency, and they added in a mental chorus, "It's only the Giles'."

Even as they came down the steps into Windmill Street they became aware of a change at the store. There was little difference in the face it presented to the street, but they were aware at once that it had come to life within.

"I do hate things to happen when I'm out," said Maud, and quickened her pace. "Perhaps it's——"

"Yes," said Fanny, "it is."

As they approached the door she was overtaken by panic. A modest young lady could retire into her bonnet, as a snail into its shell. Fanny prayed that her clothes would absorb her. She did not want to meet him now, coming

inconsequently home from an afternoon's parading before the barracks. The seed cake was the final touch of bathos. Loud voices came from the courtyard, and the straining of ropes as the tide called to the ship moored at the wharf. Fanny saw a tall form beside her father's, standing in the far doorway, and bolted for the stairs. The quartermaster shouted after her retreating figure:

"Fanny, lay a couple of extra covers. Hildebrand and Meikle are coming up to dinner."

"He's forgotten all about the Giles'," tittered Maud, following her sister up the stairs.

III

Fanny was a whirlwind of energy. Every one else was as an effigy in wood, created to baulk.

"No, miss, I *can't* make no pasties," declared Katie, folding her arms on her stomach as if she meant to keep them there for ever. "And you know as well as I do that jellies have to be made in the morning. I do declare, Miss Fanny, I've never seen you so flustered like before. There, now, don't take on—the dinner's all right." In return for this unusual entertainment she finally consented to make a *soufflé*.

The girls were dressing. Fanny took from the wardrobe, which it almost filled, her new rose-coloured organdie, with the lovely cream-lace berthe.

"You're never going to wear that!" cried Maud.

"Yes, I am."

This day had the air of a great day—fortune was at its flood to-night. It was in the air, Fanny was breathing it in great gulps of excitement. She was determined to play her part regally.

The dress flowed and billowed about her, held out on starched and boned petticoats. Tiny pink rosebuds held the scallops of cream lace; the bodice was like a flower-holder, a rose-coloured cone out of which her bare shoulders rose. The deep berthe fell over her breast and arms, supplementing the short, tight sleeves. With arms raised to fix a cluster of rosebuds in her dark hair Fanny saw herself

full length in the cheval-glass and thrilled with surprise and joy.

"Darling, how beautiful you are to-night," Maud cried.

"You too, Maud."

They flew into each other's arms.

"Lovely Fanny!"

"Lovely Maud!"

They broke apart, laughing a little at their own emotion. Fanny fled to see that all was well in the dining-room. She touched flowers and fruit to a more fashionable abandon, from a cupboard she brought the two high, ceremonial silver candlesticks, and set them before her place, in line with the four majolica ones that Katie had deemed sufficient. With intent face, Fanny touched the six tall white virginal candles with fire. She was pleased with the table. In the centre was the épergne of clear glass dusted over with golden stars, its tray piled with peaches and bananas, the crown a-wave with asters. It was flanked on either side by cornucopias of imitation marble gushing asters on the damask. The cornucopias had come from England, packed carefully in her underlinen. Her aunt Sophia had presented them to her to be a leaven of refinement in the barbaric new world. The blue wine-glasses, the Gargantuan salt-cellars, the heavy silver, were as they should be. The silver had a mellow, family air. True it was somebody else's family of which it smacked, for the quartermaster had bought it at an auction for a third of its value.

Fanny was to remember that moment—the breath of the open window upon her neck, the broken cadence of the water, the empty garnished room waiting, a lighted upper chamber hanging like a star in time. Her heart, suddenly hollow now that it had been emptied of the anxiety that had become second nature, waited to be filled with happiness. Immortal moment that was gone within the minute.

IV

The company was gathered, nine souls, by candlelight. Out of her new self, in her crystalline detachment, Fanny

saw them as if for the first time. Before her, at the other end of the avenue of candles, she saw her father's red, genial face. He was happy. He liked feeding people. To him there was something sacred in the partaking of hospitality. At the table all enmities were laid aside. The man or woman who ate his bread was sacred, a guest. Upon his left, magnificently arrayed in puce, with jet jewellery, Fanny saw the imperial form of the caged, suburban eagle that men knew as Mrs Giles. Her eyes emptied out and shook all they saw. Fanny beheld devastation in the wake of her glance. The fruit upon the épergne grew smaller, the silver proclaimed itself a bargain at an auction, the spot of iron-rust on the cloth swelled and shouted. How Mrs Giles would have stiffened in her whalebone sheath if she had known that that chit of a Fanny was pitying her! Fanny saw her as a woman who perpetually overreached herself, who brought an axe to cut string, and bludgeoned her husband when a gentle shove was all he needed. Hers was the suppressed violence of one long-thwarted, but it was not the hardships of life that had thwarted this strange woman, it was the lack of them. Her sex and the gentility of her class had ruined her. She wielded limitless energy in an insignificant field. Energy without competence turned to a restless poison. And Mr Giles—the small, fat, pursy man with the little, meaningless gestures of importance! He was willing to surrender everything, had surrendered everything, so long as he might keep the manner of importance, his one tenacity in heaven knows what storm and stress. Then there was Euphemia—the youngest child, left defenceless in her advancing age before her terrible mother.

Fanny's eyes veered with her thoughts across the table to Euphemia. She felt as if she were peering at the life of the Giles' through a pane of thick, greenish glass. Day and night that terrible woman tried to harry Euphemia into being attractive, being a success. She couldn't bear the reproach that her child should fail to win a husband and a home. Possibly her love for Euphemia had turned sour with the rest of her character, had turned, too, to a black violence. She was trying to save Euphemia by force.

Fanny saw daily scenes, bitter upbraidings, the father seeking only peace, Euphemia desperate, a spring broken somewhere, never at ease. She had never seen Euphemia without her mother. Mrs Giles's eye was like a pistol at her daughter's head. Euphemia did her best, but her grasping, mechanical gaiety was like rouge on an ancient cheek, and her coquetry was on a note of falsetto. She wasn't so bad really, Fanny reflected, for she was of those whom happiness makes tolerant; it was only manner and clothes. Oh, dear, she should never wear yellow with that sallow complexion, and what must Maud be thinking of those dreadful sleeves? No one wore them big, now. The sleeves themselves seemed aware of their *faux pas*, and sagged down upon their wire frames in a lamentable way.

William was doing his duty. His pose was immaculate, his manner polished. In fact he was holding a slippery shield of politeness between himself and Euphemia. He was in agony, but he was a gentleman. Fanny thought it a little mean of him to be always so correct. Could he really be in love with his Adela? Fanny didn't think so. She didn't think anyone else had ever been in love before except perhaps Dante and Romeo and Juliet. Papa was proud of William because he was his son and William was presentable enough though far too thin. Could anyone fall in love with William? It would be rather like falling in love with a marble mantelpiece. Fanny almost laughed aloud at this thought, and she dared not look at William, so like herself yet so utterly different, being painstakingly and obtusely civil to the impossible and tragic Euphemia only a few feet away from her amazing secret. William would never guess anybody's secret. But Maud? That kiss had been like a confidence. Fanny regretted her life of circumspection and the good sense that had been her boast, for against this background every act of vanity or exuberance that she might yield to now would stand out in glaring contrast. "What does it matter?" her drumming pulses cried to her beating heart.

Maud was doing her duty too. She was salvaging Mr Meikle from the very deep water in which he was fallen. As mate on the *Rosamund* he was a tower of strength. Until

this moment he had scarcely known the meaning of fear. He was face to face with the mysterious phenomenon, gentility—he sweated profusely to think how, from the safety of the Antarctic Ocean, he had scorned this thing. It had seemed natural enough when the quartermaster had said, "Expect you to dinner!" He had not known it would be like this, nor that he was as he was. He had not known, for instance, that he had hands like hams, or that he made a deafening noise when he drank soup. On his left, Mrs Giles was visibly trying to make up her mind whether to be offended at being placed next to the creature or to regard him as an original with the tolerance one extends to the animals at the Zoo. On his right Maud plied him with the whole battery of her charms. She coquetted with him amazingly, that being the only solace she could devise for the male in distress. It brought Mr Meikle out in blotches both within and without. Maud liked him, she was enjoying herself as she nearly always did. Maud, Fanny thought, would always be happy. She thought it a little contemptuously. She doubted if Maud had any great capacity for emotions or suffering. She was as people ought to be. There were no creases in Maud, no sharp turnings, nothing irrational—a person who actually and without effort attained happiness; and so, concluded Fanny, she would never know ecstasy.

V

She had succeeded in pitying and dismissing every one at the table except the man at her side. When she looked at him the others turned by magic into cardboard figures. That he was changed she knew immediately he had stepped into the room. He was finely dressed as she had never seen him before, but it was not that, significant though it was. There was in his eyes, in his whole bearing, something that was at once assuaged and hungry. The quartermaster had seen it too. "Like an animal that has had a kill," he thought, with a sudden distaste for the man. "He can go to Halifax if he starts any of his monkey tricks on what's virtually my boat."

To Fanny he was a conqueror come home. She saw in him a new confidence and a new fire, and she thought she understood. This voyage had been crucial, he was heavily in debt and if he had failed this time he would have been ruined. But he had not failed. The season had been too bad for Captain Bennet and the lesser kind—they had been driven home empty. But he—Fanny knew that he had had a successful voyage. It was in the air. Perhaps his success meant more to him than keeping his ship. When he first came in, standing in the doorway, half a head taller than any other man in the room, in his splendid suit of royal blue over a white and silver waistcoat, he had looked at her and at her only. A second had stretched out to eternity while they looked at one another, and then he had bent over her hand. She had known then that it was no idle impulse that had hurried her into her new gown. It had been a divine leading.

She stole a glance at him. He was much thinner—his features were worn almost to emaciation, and he was tanned by salt and wind to a deeper brown, so that his likeness to a sculptured head upon an ancient coin was clearer than ever. "An emperor," thought Fanny; "a Greek emperor," she thought, dexterously combining the "glory that was Greece," with the "grandeur that was Rome." She thought him much improved—as if so much dross had been scraped away leaving him translucent with the fire of his spirit. But her heart tightened to think of the privations that had so refined him.

The talk drifted to her in gusts.

"What sort of a voyage did you have, Hildebrand?" Mr Giles broke across the reticulation of *tête-à-tête*.

"Good—that is, at the end."

"Monstrous good," put in the quartermaster. "He could hardly stagger into port, he was loaded to the gunwales."

"You must know something—the town's full of broke whalers. The dirtiest weather for thirty years and not a whale in the sea. How did you do it, eh? We'd given you up for lost!"

"I waited," Hildebrand said, with a curious lifting smile, as if he were secretly fingering an immense satisfaction.

"Oh, Captain Hildebrand, do tell us about your adventures!" cried Maud.

"I'm sure there is nothing that would interest a young lady."

Maud pouted; it was a dangerous thing to say to her.

"Mr Meikle will tell me," she said, melting into smiles.

"I adore adventures," breathed Miss Euphemia. "Don't you, Mr William? I'm such a romantic girl."

"Well, miss!" began Meikle.

"He's going to tell us," cried Maud. "Listen, everybody."

"I was only going to say as we didn't have any adventures, not what you'd call adventures—that is, in a way of speaking," said Meikle lamely.

"Oh, Mr Meikle, you disappoint me! I won't believe that you and Captain Hildebrand didn't have adventures. Captain Hildebrand always does. You ask him, Fanny——"

"We would love to hear about your voyage, Captain Hildebrand," said Fanny, because she could do no other, but she felt the tension, felt it as a peril to her fragile crystal happiness.

He shrugged, the smile was on his lips again, and he had an air of recklessness, a swagger.

"Why not tell them our little adventures, Meikle," he said. "I'm sure you'd do it inimitably," and he raised his glass with a gesture that Fanny realized was curiously familiar.

Mr Meikle had crumbled bread into his soup and was stirring it with his spoon. He was ill at ease. He was not quite as bluff and hearty, there was something sharp and desperate under his bulk.

"Well!" said Mrs Giles, suddenly turning on him.

Mr Giles, being a little deaf, thrust forward his head like a tortoise to hear the better. Euphemia clasped her hands upon her bosom and waited in that beautiful pose. William attended discreetly to his dinner. The quartermaster, forgetting the sacred board, rapped out in the voice he had used when he really was a quartermaster, "What did happen?"

"Well," said the wretched Meikle, "in a manner of speaking we had a peck of trouble. First it was the weather. Dirty weather, if you like, and a most onnatural west wind that drove us out of our course. Seven days and seven nights——"

"And there were we in the longitude of the Horn and about a hundred miles to the south," Hildebrand swept in, "a black sky and a black-and-white sea. And cold—the very spray froze; our breath froze—the ship was almost sheathed in ice. The rigging cut the men's hands to pieces. We had her stripped to the storm staysails. The South Sea's the most barren sea in the world. It's unlucky, too, down there south of the Horn. Ask my men. Pardon me, Meikle, go on."

"As I was saying, it was dirty weather, and the crew didn't like it, none of us didn't like it, but you can't choose your weather. After seven days the wind dropped, but it was seven days wasted and we were driven hundreds of miles from the whaling grounds. Maybe you know, and maybe you don't know, the *Rosamund's* a smallish boat. She's a good boat, but she's small. Takes a crew of twelve all told, and don't carry provisions for more than a couple of months. It took more than a week getting back where we wanted to get. And we were becalmed an' that was as bad as the storm. The crew didn't like it!"

"Days like bubbles," Hildebrand murmured to Fanny, "perfect, clear and empty—as if the storm had blown all the life out of the world. It was hard to imagine that anything else still lived. So free—you would have adored it."

"Yes," said Fanny. She wished he would tell the story, for she saw that there was a story, vivid and strange, behind the mate's shambling narrative.

It was evident that Meikle was ill at ease—his eyes wandered unhappily to his master's face, he looked fallen away, like a man who had been under a strain. Hildebrand went on smiling at him in a sort of mocking encouragement.

"I've been at sea, man and boy, for forty years, an' I've never known a voyage the like of this 'n. There weren't any whales in the Southern Ocean. There was nothing.

An' the cook he took religious—him being a nigger an' not knowing any better, pore chap. We had a couple of Norwegians aboard, too. Now, Norwegians is good sailors, but they see things that aren't there, don't they, Cap'n?"

"Nils saw a hand of fire come out of the sky—and when he looked over the side in the moonlight he saw a drowned man floating beside us all night long."

Euphemia squealed and brought upon herself the captain's burning eyes.

"It come to this, we were all put on half-rations, and that didn't improve anyone's temper. The crew began to say it was time to turn home and we'd do no good not if we stayed till Doomsday. Nils, he got the idea that Doomsday had come and gone and we'd been forgotten. You should have heard the hullaballoo the cook made then—him being religious as I told you a while ago. Cap'n here, he wouldn't budge, an' then he cut down the rations a bit more. And—well, to tell you the truth, Mr Hyde, sir," went on Meikle in a sudden, too hearty burst of confidence, "we had a bit of trouble."

"Mutiny on the high seas," put in the captain crisply.

"Very ugly they looked, too. Something about a mutiny, you can hear it before it happens, like drums a long way off. I heard those drums and Cap'n heard them, an' then dinner-time came and no dinner—not to call dinner—and that finished them. There was the crew down in the waist, and they had their knives and the belaying-pins and such-like, and it was clear enough they meant to fight. They were angry and frightened. Cap'n, he watched them like they were animals at the Zoo. He never so much as took down the blunderbuss in his cabin. After he'd had a good look he walked down towards them. I didn't feel too comfortable, I can tell you, then. They thought he was going to parley an' they wavered a bit. Then he stopped and held up his hands, and there was nothing in them, and he hollers to them to send the leader to him. Nils comes out.

"'What do you want,' says Cap'n.

"'To go home,' says Nils.

"Cap'n looks at him for a moment, then quick as knife

hits him on the jaw with his fist, and down he goes on the deck. And then Cap'n turns on his heel and comes back, as slow as he went. And nuthin' happened.

" 'I'm not afraid of the starving curs,' says he to me. 'They've left it too late.' So we went on—day after day——"

Two people saw those days dropping heavy and slow into the empty ocean—days of an incredible empty stress, an epic of endurance, the rapacity of one man's will. For Hildebrand they had an intense reality transcending any experience he had known. He had seen the very nakedness of life. They had been the apex of his career, the fulfilment of his will. He had touched the bedrock of power, stood out against the sea, both its force and its enchantments, his crew, his own humanity, and the weakness of the flesh. Something of this passed from him to Fanny. She was exquisitely receptive. She saw, actually saw, the processional of gaunt days, and she understood why Hildebrand's eyes held that look of curious assuagement. She knew he had drunk an elixir of power the more potent because it was mixed with suffering. She lost the thread of the narrative—the tale of starving men who gnawed leather when they had eaten the very rats of the hold, who muttered in impotence, but dared not strike, becoming diseased and a little mad, slid past her. On the heels of despair had come a change of fortune. The sea was thick with whales and the crew too weak to take them. The captain served rum all round, and between the spirit and desperation several sperm-whales were killed and taken in tow. It was a difficult and dangerous business, the waves were churned to foam and the foam reddened with blood.

"The poor whales!" cried Euphemia.

One boat was upset and a man lost—the ill-starred Nils, his broken jaw still bandaged, grotesque and pitiful. The capture benefited the ship very little, it exhausted the crew's strength, but it did break the spell of the captain's will. He steered for the nearest land with all possible haste. It was a race with death. They made a landfall on one of the barren islands of the South Pacific. It was poor enough, but it was land. There was water and some sort of

vegetation. The men roasted and ate strips of whale-meat, they greased their starved bodies with blubber, they boiled leaves and grass with salt and ate that. Four days after the *Rosamund* left and made Port Phillip. She lay up there and the crew recuperated. That was all. It had been a profitable trip.

It was a curious story for a dinner-party. It broke up the social convention, driving every one of the nine people gathered there back into his own individuality. There was an awkward silence. Even Maud had nothing to say. Katie, who had been agape in the doorway, recollected herself and began to clear away the plates. Fanny dispensed the *soufflé* as in a dream. Conversation arose again in little heedless whirls and scatters.

William was saying, "The country is very dry. I ride out of town quite a lot, you know—the fields are so brown you can't see the sheep on them."

"I think sheep are so disappointing. I thought they'd be white and woolly and I'd have one for a pet and tie a blue ribbon round its neck. Wasn't I a goose?"

"Not at all, Miss Euphemia."

"Do show me your horse—of course I've heard about him —or should I say her? Oh, dear, what am I saying? I do think gentlemen look so noble on horseback."

"Clara wants to send her eldest boy to the Normal school, but I said no, he'll be godless enough without that——"

"What have you been doing, Miss Fanny?"

"Nothing, nothing at all."

"Did you ever think of poor sailor-men on the sea?"

"Indeed, Captain Hildebrand, indeed I did."

"You do not know what it is to come back, to sit at an elegant table, to eat delicately, to see beautiful women again." His eyes said "To see you." Under cover of the talk their conversation was peculiarly intimate.

"What do you think of the City Council we've elected, Mr Hyde?"

"A poor lot, Giles. Did you see what the *Herald* had to say about them this morning?"

"That is pure prejudice, Papa," said William, less from

conviction than from a desire to escape from Euphemia into the safe channels of a general argument. His ruse failed, for his remark attracted no attention from the quartermaster, and Euphemia rallied once more to the attack.

The quartermaster was proclaiming his satisfaction in the fact that Sydney had now scored one over Melbourne, whose inhabitants had to struggle along as mere burgesses while Sydney residents now rejoiced in the full glory of citizenship. Mrs Giles had wrested Meikle from Maud's enchantment, and Maud was surreptitiously absorbed in the struggles of William.

"Ravishing!" cried Euphemia.

"That's just what that girl does want," thought the quartermaster.

Fanny rose.

VI

The scene in the drawing-room took on all the quality of a picture, lifelike, but unreal. It might have been any company, anywhere. Euphemia sat with a large, slippery volume of sacred engravings on her lap, exclaiming with impartial piety over every representation. William leaned attentively on the back of her chair. Maud sat at the harpsichord, turning over her music while Mr Giles told her of the songs his mother used to sing, that were so much better than the modern rubbish. Mrs Giles sat four-square in her chair and visibly disapproved of Maud. She was minutely and acutely aware of William's every movement and was speculating on Euphemia's progress. Above and beyond these occupations she was able to dominate the men's talk. She had three of them grouped about her. She always collected men about her and flattered herself thereon, much as a fly-paper might congratulate itself on its catch. The quartermaster stood before his empty hearth, his feet apart, hands in pockets, genial and possessive, an Englishman at home. Meikle stood, simply stood, uncertain, distressed. He was conscious of a desire to escape, to pick his teeth, of the tedium of his Sunday clothes, and of impotence of body, mind, and soul.

There was eternity in the room under the lovely shallow candlelight. The light twinkled on lustres, lay in a pool on the Turkey carpet; it drenched Maud in effulgence; flowed over Euphemia's bent head, her face in shadow as it bent over the album; smote William upon the forehead; caught here and there the sheen of satin-wood and mahogany, the soft gleam of china, the high lights of a buckle or a ring; turned the glass shade over the clock to a waterfall. Mrs Giles's nose made a grotesque shadow on her face. It was, Fanny thought, like a room preserved in light and held, poised in equilibrium, unchanging through the years. The candles burnt unflickering; virginal, thoughtless, ghostly ellipses of candle-flame showed in the glass of a picture. While you were in the room everything else seemed incredible. The world of adventure and effort, so close half an hour ago, was inconceivable. It was inconceivable that outside those windows, thrown open in the still heat, was a road by which men in irons went down to Cockatoo. Men did not starve and fight and suffer, they turned over the leaves of an album or chose a song for a lady. The men and women before her were no longer vessels of human passion, they were lay figures in polite society. This, this was all. A cold wind of prophecy that did not stir the candles blew across Fanny's heart. Only the commonplace was real, mattered, and it would get us in the end—every mother's daughter—all the fiery dreams in all the world would fall back blunted and dull from the great bulk of the commonplace. Her eyes, as once before that night, went on stepping-stones from one to another till they came to Hildebrand. The room had no power over him. In the shadow, apart in spirit, his head bent, waiting and suffering it all. He looked up as Fanny crossed the room.

"Ah!" he said, "I had forgotten. I left something down in the store. If you will excuse me——"

"William!" bawled the quartermaster.

"No, no, I beg you—Mr William is engaged. Perhaps Miss Fanny would show me a light."

He handed her one of the branched candlesticks, bowing

with mocking eyes that belied the gesture. As he pulled the door to, he said :

"I couldn't endure that woman another minute."

Mrs Giles's jaw dropped—not because she had heard the remark, but on general principles.

VII

"Fanny! Where's that girl? Maud, where's your sister?"

"She went out for a minute, Papa," answered Maud, lowering her eyelids discreetly.

"Then fetch her in."

Anyone who had the patience to disentangle the time from the gilt ornamentation of the parlour clock could see it was a quarter-past ten. If the guests were not fed now, goodness knows when they would get away.

Out on the landing Maud considered the delicacy of her mission. A faint light stole up the stairs from the store. One never knew with Fanny. Perhaps they were only discussing the habits of fish. She stood at the bend of the stairs. Three-quarters of the store was hidden from her view, but the wall in front of her was illuminated and two shadows moved upon it, a slim, tall shadow with a spreading skirt and a taller shadow with coat-tails. They were very close, and, as she stood for a moment glued to the stair, they merged together. The tall shadow held the slight shadow about the waist, and two unmistakably feminine arms were about his neck. Maud knew a kiss when she saw one. She uttered a minute involuntary squeak and scuttled upstairs again. She hesitated, then seizing the nearest door banged it violently.

"Lordy, Miss Maud!" cried Katie, craning round her bedroom door a head adorned with the promise of to-morrow's curls. "Whatever did you do that for?"

"It was all I could think of," answered Maud cryptically.

So Fanny returned in time to the seed-cake which her prophetic soul had told her earlier in the day was destined for an anti-climax.

VIII

The guests had gone. Jackie had been roused from sleep to get the Giles's chariot. Euphemia had fluttered a white hand from the dark window as they jolted away. To Fanny it was like an appeal for help. She was sorry for all the people in the world who were not happy, and would have fed them at the overflowing happiness of her own heart.

Going back to the parlour to gather up the glasses and the crumby plates, she surprised William and the quartermaster in the midst of an argument.

". . . You can't, Papa—after this."

"A mutiny is a mutiny, and no master worth his salt would take it sitting down."

"But I don't mean the mutiny—before that. He hadn't a chance in a hundred—it was criminal to risk the lives of his crew. The man's insane with vanity."

The quartermaster seemed tired and heavy.

"Yes, yes, William, but after all he brought them back, and it's his affair, not mine."

"You condone it, then."

"I don't, but you don't understand how a man can care for a ship. He'd rather wreck her than lose her—rather die with her."

In heavy silence they watched Fanny gather up the plates, her cheeks scarlet.

It had been a long day. Fanny in her night-rail stood at the open window to cool her head. A southerly breeze had sprung up after the hot day, and it was deliciously cool outside. "To-morrow the house will be full of dust," Fanny thought mechanically. Maud had given up hope of confidences and had turned over to sleep.

Fanny lay down and shut her eyes—the vision of the lighted room came back to her for a moment. It blew like a bubble through her dreaming mind, stripped of significance. Then she slept, for her ship had come home.

IX

The days that followed conspired to belittle the romantic interlude on the night of the dinner-party. As it drifted down the week it took on an isolated and episodic character. It would have drifted out of Maud's memory altogether, for she knew even better than most that one kiss does not make a marriage, but she knew Fanny too. Fanny went through the empty days with a quiet certainty. She believed. Freed from doubt she could afford to wait—she was of the quality that can wait a lifetime without changing, given an inward certainty.

Hildebrand came neither to the store nor to the dwelling above it. It was plain that his relations with the quartermaster were strained but not broken. He had fallen in standing from a friend to a business connexion. William would have driven the matter to a rupture, but the quartermaster was too shrewd to lose the best whaling captain in the South and too honest to penalize a man for an action which he understood and with which, instinctively, he half sympathized. The *Rosamund* had been damaged and was in the hands of the shipwrights. The tapping of their hammers was a friendly and comforting sound to Fanny's ears. The captain did not live on board while the work progressed, but stayed at the Whalers' Arms, and no one knew how he spent his time between visits to his ship. His tall figure would be seen crossing the courtyard, never once raising his eyes to the windows above, coming back, disappearing, Moses the yard-dog following him a few steps with suspicion, then coming back to lie in the sun. Meikle was in and out of the store as usual, he was too inconsiderable a person for anyone to care whether he was justified or not in whatever he did. Fanny burned with shame at the behaviour of her family and conceived a shallow, bitter hostility toward William. She was unable to see any fault in her lover, as she now openly thought of him. His conduct in avoiding her seemed amply explained by her father's and brother's attitude. It rallied her fidelity to him. It was for her, whose father had

injured him, to make a generous advance. She began to plot.

It was the year 1842, and Sydney was growing in prosperity and size. Its streets had been lit the previous year by gas. It had just been incorporated, and its citizens were patting themselves on the back and talking of the enlightened times. It is true they were still innocently drinking the water from the Botany swamp and that the just disposed of their refuse and the unjust did not, since it was purely a matter of taste. The Rocks in all its unholy confusion and dirt was to flourish for another seventy years, nor was the voice of the health inspector heard in the land. An Englishman's house was still his castle. A programme had been arranged to celebrate the inauguration of the newly elected City Council. A select minority of important citizens was to be entertained at a civic dinner at the Royal Hotel in George Street, and a large number at the great ball that was to follow. The common herd was to be entertained by a pyrotechnic display in the Domain and free beer served on trestles set up on the site of what is now the Art Gallery.

The quartermaster and his family had received an invitation to the ball. This was not remarkable, because after the obvious and official personages had been invited the invitations were in the gift of the aldermen. Several of them were his friends and he had business relations with others. He was becoming known as a 'sound man' with a presentable family, nor had the taint of conviction passed upon him. The great square invitations beautifully engrossed—James Hyde, Esq., Mr William Hyde, The Misses Hyde—had caused a considerable flutter in Windmill Street, and although the great day was a fortnight off the girls had everything in readiness. A cravat of the latest mode had been bought by Maud for the quartermaster's unwilling neck. It was a short, thick neck, unadapted to the elegancies of that day. The barber had been bespoken to dress the young ladies' hair—an unusual event this for the quartermaster's daughters, and the barber was no less a person than Quarles of Pitt Street, who would come to them hot from producing the auburn curls of the commander's lady,

driving up to the store in his smart closed carriage for all the world like a doctor, carrying his discreet bag of pomatums and tongs and other more secret aids to beauty. The mingled odours of peppermint and brilliantine which he puffed down his clients' necks were the very breath of life to Sydney *belles*. No toilet was blessed without them.

Maud was to wear white as this was virtually her *début*. She had spent much loving thought upon her gown with its draped over-skirt, pointed bodice, and lace bertha. A single rose was destined chastely to adorn her hair, a gold chain her neck, and an authentic bernouse to conceal her splendour in the street. Fanny would wear the frock she had so incontinently put on for the dinner-party, and she was almost as delighted by the prospect as Maud. Then she discovered that on the very night of the ball the *Rosamund* was to go out on the night tide. Could she dance with other men while he fared out into the lonely sea? Ah, could she? She clasped her hands upon her bosom and thought not.

This was the last spur to her determination. The next day she waylaid the captain in the courtyard and he invited her and Maud to drink tea with him on board the *Rosamund*. The shipwrights had finished their work, the loading had not begun. The excursion was as delightful as stolen fruit is reputed to be. Maud peeped into everything and was sometimes surprised. She found the captain's cramped little cabin in the stern quaintly nautical with its framed charts, gun-rack, fresh white-painted woodwork, and wooden model of a fourmaster with parchment sails. The tea, which consisted of biscuits, a novelty called damper, and a rich, sodden 'sea' cake full of 'currants,' was piquant. Even the pewter mugs and enamelled plates took her fancy.

Meikle was absent, which was a good thing, for he was a very commonplace person. The captain could not have told half his stories, either, in the face of his mate's open-mouthed surprise.

After tea he placed chairs for the girls on the larboard deck, looking out into the harbour. They might have been a hundred miles from the store. "He might pull up the anchor and run away with us," thought Maud with a thrill,

and glanced sideways at Fanny. Fanny was very gay, and her cheeks were flushed. Hildebrand was showing them his telescope—a small brass one mounted on a tripod.

"When I have no lovely young ladies to look at I look at the stars," he said jocosely.

"How lovely!" cried Maud. "I do *love* the stars."

"What a pity it isn't dark now—then I should have the stars and the lovely young ladies, and we could look at them together."

He dived into the deckhouse and brought out a metal cylinder from which he shook a parchment roll.

"This is a chart of the heavens in the Southern hemisphere—I've been working at it for a couple of years. If you'd just hold that corner, Miss Fanny—thank you."

The chart lay unfolded across Fanny's knees while she kept down the curling edges with either hand and forearm. As he bent over to explain it the captain inevitably brushed her shoulder. Maud crowded in to see too. The chart, which was Greek to the girls for all their absorbed and intelligent-seeming interest, partook in part of the science of the cartographer and in part of the ancient ritual of the skies. It was drawn in Indian ink, finely and delicately, and the margins were littered with pencilled calculations which impressed Maud very much. Her arithmetic was limited to five-finger exercises, and it was little short of magical to her that anyone could indulge so casually in long and complicated calculations. Each planet was represented by its special sign so that the chart was scattered over with tiny medallions and labelled with Latin inscriptions finely printed upon scrolls. Fanny thought: "How accomplished," and her eyes repeated it. Her cheek so near the captain's lips was flatteringly rosy, the hand that his almost touched was alive with pulses. These symptoms in a pretty woman never failed to please him.

"That," he said, "is Venus."

They looked at Venus—somehow Venus seemed significant, though no one knew why. Perhaps it was the captain's golden voice that years of bawling at sailors had not spoiled. They voyaged among the stars. He spoke richly of a

hundred thousand miles, the signs of the zodiac fell from his lips like an incantation, stations of the heavens like a triumphal roll-call—Hydra, Centaurus, Columba, Horologium, Dorado, Indus, Nuisea, Circinus, Norma; and names of the stars like household gods—Acharna, Aldebaran, Sirius, the Pleiades. Fanny raised her hands in delight and the chart rolled up with a crisp clatter. The thread was broken. All three simultaneously became aware that the sun was sinking. The girls fled like conspirators. Maud was the first to reach the wharf. Hildebrand detained Fanny long enough to whisper, "I should like to show you the stars—could you come back to-night?"

"Yes," she breathed.

"Nine o'clock," he murmured. "I shall wait for you here."

They were gone. If anyone had told Fanny she had unhesitatingly made an assignation she would have been righteously indignant. This, of course, was different.

It was not easy for Fanny to get away. The least vigilant and exacting of fathers, the quartermaster still expected certain duties. At nine o'clock Fanny must mix and bring him his punch—Fanny and no other, and while he drank he liked to talk to her. She had to make the punch under his supervision, and he watched her like a lynx, as if this were the most important event of the day.

"More lemon, Fanny," he would shout. "No, no, not yet! Stir it, girl. *Stir it.* That's right, just a drop more. Your husband will thank me some day. It's not every female gets an education like this."

Every evening he said courteously, as if to a stranger: "Have some, William, do you good."

And every evening William said:

"No, thank you, Papa, not to-night," and went on reading. It was not intended that he should have any. Punch was the prerogative of the head of the family. He took it as a cordial, its preparation was a rite. Before his partnership William had never been invited to partake. Now out of his rather curious and very precise sense of justice the quartermaster felt constrained to offer his son this token of equality.

To-night the ritual dragged on and on. Fanny, after a restless evening, got up early to make it:

"Don't be in such a hurry," said the quartermaster; "not time yet."

She had perforce to sit down again for another ten minutes watching the hands of the clock creep toward nine. At last in forced calm she was permitted to cut the lemons. At ten past nine she was reckless. The quartermaster was savouring his punch, and before he had time to tell her it wasn't sweet enough she had gone with an inarticulate excuse.

Her little heelless slippers made no sound upon the cobbles, the two dark wings of the store rose on either side of her, fencing in a rectangle of sky. Fanny fled from their shelter in panic as many another has fled from safety. Hildebrand stepped out of the shadow.

"How marvellous of you to come."

"Did you not know I would come?"

"I hoped."

His voice was warm and intimate, it wrapped her away in another world. The *Rosamund* appeared deserted and in darkness except for her riding lights. Fanny was forced to take her guide's hand. To walk hand in hand with him in the dark seemed to her innocent and beautiful. The telescope was set up in the bow.

"You must not have a light for star-gazing," he said. The starlight was growing upon her so that now she could see his figure, cloaked and tall, and he could see the white blur of her face and clasped hand. There was no moon. Hildebrand adjusted the telescope, almost in silence. As he adjusted the swivel their fingers touched. That was their real conversation. Presently they were sitting in the chairs they had occupied that afternoon, how long ago—and Maud had been there too. Fanny sat up straight and rigid because she was keyed to her highest pitch and was quite unaware that she was the picture of decorum.

Hildebrand was talking of himself—fitting himself with leisurely grace to this quaint little idyll with the quartermaster's daughter. To have her here alone on his ship was certainly a score against that self-sufficient young jackanapes

her brother. How mortified he would be to think that his sister had put her reputation in the hands of a rogue like himself! Beyond that, Fanny herself interested him. He found her piquant, she puzzled him a little. Her behaviour in keeping this tryst with him was at complete variance with her behaviour now. She had done a rash and almost incredible thing, and went on behaving with the utmost gentility. Was she confident or innocent? Was she willing to take as a matter of course any overtures he might make? If so he feared he'd disappoint her. He remembered the night he had come back; he had been rather impressed by her. Coming home from his long and stormy journey, she had seemed to him fine, even beautiful. He had glimpsed a steadiness in her, a depth that might satisfy a man. She had been for him by far the most attractive, though perhaps not the prettiest woman at the dinner-party. Maud was too obviously labelled "Fire." Though he liked playing with fire well enough he didn't care to play with it circumspectly as he would have to do with Miss Maud. Fanny, less dangerous, was more suitable. That evening of all evenings he had had to make love to some woman, and Fanny had been not altogether unresponsive. He would not go too far with her, even if he could. That would be suicidal. He would throw a spell over her, foster these clandestine meetings as a secret weapon and revenge upon William, whose influence he detected in his fall from grace with the quartermaster. He suspected that William would be as galled by an intrigue as by a betrayal, but the quartermaster would not. So, being a little tired of abundant and tinsel loves, he found it his pleasure as well as his policy to dally with Fanny. A pure and sentimental dalliance it should be. Therefore he spoke to her of himself with sorrowful dignity and drew the sort of picture of his life that he thought would appeal to her.

"Ah, Miss Fanny," he was saying, "a young lady who has been sheltered all her life can hardly understand how hard life can be for a man."

"I can," she said quietly.

"You are different—it is not to every female that a man

can give his confidence," he sighed. "My father was—well, never mind who he was, that doesn't matter now—I was born to wealth and a social position. I had an elder brother and a younger sister. My mother died when we were all young. Alas, Miss Fanny, a motherless boy is sadly handicapped! My father paid considerable attention to my brother, who was his heir, but my sister was his delight. Lucy and I played together, and she was the leader. I was her slave. One day we ventured out on the lake in a little boat the gardeners kept. The boat upset, and we were thrown into deep water. A gardener rescued me unconscious, but alive. Lucy was drowned. My father could not forgive me, and never saw me again. I was sent to a remote estate on the sea coast and left to the mercy of servants who knew my father hated me. I was lonely and unhappy."

"Oh, cruel, unjust!" breathed Fanny.

"My father's bailiff was a rogue. Among other things he was a smuggler and under cover of my father's estate was making a considerable fortune out of French wines. Before I was fifteen, I too was involved in the traffic. It was easy to persuade me. I was young and daring, this man had a genial manner and flattered me. I, poor fool, listened to him, though the rogue's motives were plain enough could I have seen them. He believed the coastguard would wink at his operations if they knew my father's son was involved. Also if I were not implicated I might be a dangerous spy. Once I had taken part in a running I was in his power. A new officer came to the coastguard-station. He was a fine type of man, invalided from the French wars. I admired him, he liked me. His friendship would have made a man of me. But the bailiff became alarmed at my intimacy with the captain and my refusal to take part in the trade. He urged me to take part in one more landing. He was himself laid up with a swollen ankle. To refuse was to betray the men who brought the stuff; he urged this should be the last time, he too would reform. I did as he told me, and he betrayed me. The man I admired above all others caught me redhanded. The others,

who had been warned, escaped in the dark. My father did not lift a finger to save me. He lopped off the rotten branch. He readily believed me to be thoroughly bad, and bore the disgrace to the family name with such fortitude and public spirit that he received nothing but sympathy and praise. Do I bore you, Miss Fanny, with my story?"

"Oh, no, no!" Fanny had forgotten the hour, the place, all but the man beside her. "Please!"

"I was tried. I would not betray the fishermen, but the bailiff I did denounce. It did me no good and him no harm. He was clever, had cleared away all traces of his knavery, and the fishermen were loyal to him, their immunity was bound up in his. I was transported to Australia when I was sixteen. With the story of that voyage and the following years in the company of the worst criminals I will not offend your ears. But at twenty-six I was free, but not to return to England. At last I got into a whaling crew. It was a hard school, but I learned to handle a ship. A few good seasons and I had a little money saved. I found some one who wanted a captain with a little capital, and so I got the *Rosamund*. That was the first piece of good fortune I had in my life. Do you wonder that I love this ship? I was fortunate, in time I was able to buy her. She has been my only possession, my only home. I might say my only friend."

"No, don't say that; we are your friends. I am!"

"How wonderful that you should say that even when you know all!"

"Believe me, dear Captain Hildebrand, I have found your story infinitely sad. I feel the greatest pity and——" She caught his hand, almost in tears.

He lowered his head with a gesture so noble and sorrowful that tears did roll down her cheeks. He might have seen them glisten.

"Ah, if only some one had had faith in me—as you have. If some good woman had loved me I would have been a better man."

"Was there never—did you never—care for anyone, I mean."

"What had I to offer any woman, and what woman would be a sailor's helpmeet? To sit at home and wait with little to spend or to brave the hardships and dangers of the sea. Who would do that for me?"

"But love," murmured Fanny feebly.

"Love is faith, and we live by faith of those we love. I was ruined by lack of faith. If I had known you years ago I might, I would, have been different. A splendid act of faith like yours means more than you can think. You have never suffered, you have never sinned. Indeed, they are not sins."

She could see his faint, sad smile in the starlight.

"I have faith in you now—always, always. It is never too late."

"Too late for me. I am a broken man, a sinner. I am not fit for a pure young girl to know. I must always be lonely."

"You mustn't, you mustn't."

Fanny was aware of the amazing profundity of her emotions and the amazing futility of her speech. Hildebrand's arm was across her chair. She was within its circle, but it did not touch her. He was leaning toward her. The breathless moment came and passed. The captain's good sense and a certain fatigue that his artistic labours had brought upon him conquered habit and the hour. He pulled himself together visibly—never was a woman left unkissed more flatteringly—rose, and strode to the bulwark.

"You must go," he said gently. "You should never have come. But I will always remember that you did come and what you have done for me by your faith, your kindness. Good night."

He raised her hand to his lips, kissed it ceremoniously, and led her toward the wharf. Fanny seethed with emotions that she could not manage. His finality sealed her lips. A moment later she was in the shadow of the courtyard raising her head instinctively to the squares of pale light that showed Maud still waked.

Maud waited for her pale and wide-eyed.

"Oh, Fanny, you gave me such a fright! Where have you been?"

"Go to bed, Maud."
"I didn't tell Papa."
"Please, Maud."

Maud thought her generosity in not giving the alarm should be rewarded, but it was useless to argue with Fanny.

Day was added to day, and Hildebrand lived up to the finality of his farewell. He came to the store now perforce as his sailing drew near. When he met the young ladies he saluted them politely, no more. He was still far from understanding Fanny, but he had seen a gleam in her eyes which made him a little nervous of open pursuit. Also he was busy, his mind had turned to the sea and his *finesse* had broken like a cobweb and blown away from him.

If Fanny's demeanour were much as usual, if she went about her household tasks with quiet competence and a grave face, her emotions were deeply disturbed. Love and pity rose in great floods, swamping her. She wanted to continue her good works—a beautiful memory was not enough. Her passion was not content to stagnate in a blind alley. Every night she thought wild, heady, tender thoughts, every day she stoically suffered agonies of hope. The reason for Hildebrand's silence and remoteness was plain to her. He felt himself unworthy of her, and he had suffered so much that he would not trust himself even to her. He had given up hope of reinstatement. He had spoken of an act of faith, that would give him back to himself. If she went to him and told him she loved him? He would not believe it, he would put her aside gently and sadly. He was bold and sure with others, but with her grave and diffident. To the world he wore a mask, he sheltered his sensitive, tortured spirit behind a pretence. She must do more, a gesture of faith that would leave him in no doubt, that would make up to him for the faithlessness of others, make up to him for everything. She blenched a little at the thought of what she was going to do but she knew her blenching to be unworthy. How mean, how ignoble to set conventions before the salvation of a tortured human soul. Fanny was resolute.

X

"You're not listening, Fanny."

"I was."

"No you were not. What is the matter?"

"I don't feel well."

"Oh, dear!" cried Maud. "You're not going to be ill to-day of all days? I will get Benjamin to mix you some sarsaparilla from the store bottle, and then you can take sal volatile at the last minute. What do you feel like?"

"My head—oh, and all over!"

"You are pale, but you don't look ill. It is the excitement."

"It is not," said Fanny hotly.

"You'll be all right, you needn't dance much, it's just as much fun to sit out."

Fanny felt mean and uncomfortable, and eagerly nursed the slight sensation of fever and sickness that her emotional excitement had brought on.

The hour arrived for dressing.

"I can't go," she said abruptly, and sat down in a heap on her bed. Maud stared at her in consternation. Fanny was white and trembling, but chiefly with the knowledge that now came the tug of war. Maud could imagine no worse disaster, she thought her sister must be ill indeed to give up a ball.

"Lie down, darling, there. Will you have the lavender water? You're quite cool, it can't be a fever. To-night of all nights, and Mr Quarles will be here directly to do our hair. I suppose we'll have to pay for having yours done just the same. Don't you think you could make an effort?"

"No," said Fanny.

The quartermaster, appealed to, said, "Leave the girl alone. If she's sick she can't go out. Bless me, Maud, this isn't the last ball on earth."

He poked his head into Fanny's room and inquired, "Want the saw-bones, my dear?"

"No, oh, no, Papa. I'll be all right to-morrow. I only want to be quiet." She was now a little hysterical.

"She might be sickening for something," opined William; "she'd better see a doctor before we all get it."

None of them were ever ill, or if they were fought manfully against it, so the picture of Fanny calmly giving in to a headache on the night of a long-desired outing struck surprise and terror to their hearts.

"Leave the poor girl alone, let her be sick her own way," thundered the quartermaster at last, and Fanny thanked God for so good a father and nearly wept at her ingratitude in leaving him. "And I've spoilt Maud's enjoyment too," she reflected contritely.

Then a debate arose about leaving her.

"Katie wants to go to see the fireworks with her follower, but I'll tell her she can't."

"You're not to. I won't have Katie. I give Katie her orders."

"You expect people to be cross when they are sick."

"I'm sorry, Maud, but don't fuss. I'm all right."

"What is the matter? Tell me, darling," whispered Maud, kneeling by the bed and nuzzling the pillow in her most ingratiating way.

"Stop!" Fanny almost screamed; "Mr Quarles will be here soon. I'll lie down in William's room while he's here."

She lay down, her limbs twitching at the forced inaction. She could smell the curling operations and hear Mr Quarles's buttery tones extolling Maud's charms in a gentlemanly way. Of Maud she heard nothing. The poor girl was on the edge of tears.

Maud, dressed, helped Fanny tenderly back to her room. The hired coach was at the door, Fanny began to breathe more freely, but her heart was heavy, for Maud was quiet and downcast, and she hated to leave her so. The quartermaster was calling from the store.

"I won't go," said Maud; "I won't leave you all alone, darling."

Fanny was seriously alarmed. Maud was apt to be obstinate in her generosity.

"Darling Maud, you must go, I'd be miserable if you didn't. Truly it is not serious, just a bad sick headache.

I'd be sick in the hot ballroom, I know I should. It's only that. I'm sorry I was cross. I'll be all right in the morning."

"If you really would rather," Maud wavered.

"I should, indeed I should. There, you look elegant. Bend down and I'll fix your rose again. Good-bye, darling. Enjoy yourself."

The quartermaster roared without. Maud threw her bernouse round her shoulders, kissed her sister, and fled. Fanny heard the great door shut with a bang and, faintly as from another world, the coach drive off over the cobbles.

XI

It was a dark night. The moon and stars were blotted out in low soft clouds. It was nine o'clock, the *Rosamund* put out at eleven. Fanny drifted about the room, mechanically tidying those things that Maud had disarranged in her dressing. She was wearing her night-rail, as she had thought it would look well to go to bed. As she trailed past the cheval-glass she glimpsed her ghostly self and turned to stare at her image. Sombre eyes met her.

"I don't look much like a woman who is going away with a man she is not married to," she thought.

It was rather dreadful, this slow flight from an empty house. She would have liked it to be cheerful and commonplace. She went about her preparations methodically. She made a bundle of a few severe necessities, and then, with a shawl about her shoulders and the bedroom candle in her hand, went down to the store and rooted in the corner where the bales of clothing were heaped. The bales were heavy, she grew red and hot, but at last managed to accumulate a boy's outfit. Oilskins with southwester and high boots, a jersey, breeches, and leather belt. She considered these and found them a fairly adequate outfit. She tidied the corner, setting back the bales as she had found them. Then she and her shadow made their last journey upstairs. There remained to write to her father and to cut off her hair. Standing before the mirror she cut off her hair with the cutting-out scissors. A lock fell on her bare foot and

she started so that the point of the scissors pricked her head. After the first tremor she cut deliberately enough. Then she dressed herself. This was more of an ordeal. The immodesty of trousers almost eclipsed and outweighed the impropriety of the whole adventure. She might conceivably have turned back had not her hair been already cut. The oilskins were very cold as she sat down to write.

DEAR PAPA,

I am going away with Captain Hildebrand on the *Rosamund* to-night. We will be married later, so you must not worry about that part. Dear Papa, I am not doing this frivolously. I think it is right, but cannot explain why now. I enclose the money for the outfit I bought from the store, which I think is correct.

Good-bye, dear Papa, Maud, and William.

She appended a list of the clothing she had taken and signed it "Fanny" not quite steadily, then laid the note on her father's pillow.

It was after ten, and a soft, steady rain was falling. She realized that this would stop the fireworks and that Katie might be home at any moment. Now that the time had come her courage returned. She walked down the stairs happier and more confident than many a bride has gone to the altar. Maud at that moment, dancing in Humphrey Gillam's arms under the baleful eyes of his mother, touched the flying fringe of delight and pitied poor Fanny alone, sick, and unloved.

In the courtyard Fanny was a little uncertain how to act. She lingered at the corner looking toward the *Rosamund* through the fine drifting rain, wondering where Hildebrand was at that moment. She heard steps behind her. It was the captain returning to his ship after some last-minute errand.

"Richard," she said, and held out her hands, dropping her bundle in a pool. She thought that was enough, that he would understand at once. He halted abruptly. She was standing in the radiance of the store-lamp, a nimbus of rain about her.

"My God! if it isn't Miss Fanny!"

She picked up her bundle.

"I am coming with you."

He looked at her in a sort of horror. "What folly is this? Good God! with me, to-night?"

"Yes."

"Has anything happened? You're not—surely you haven't any reason for getting away, have you?"

"I thought you wanted me. I—I—see I have made a mistake." She turned blindly, comprehension as yet only touching the fringe of her mind.

"I don't understand. Tell me, please, if I can help you——"

"No, no, no!"

His hand was on her shoulder, turning her to the light.

"You wanted to elope with me, is that it?"

The voice was new, a stripped voice. The rain drove in her face.

"I thought you loved me, I thought that this—this act of faith would——"

She was appalled, and stopped.

"You believed all that! I thought you were more of a woman of the world, Miss Fanny. You were ready enough to visit me alone. I didn't think you were as innocent as this. How could I?"

She said nothing, so he went on almost cheerfully, almost contemptuously.

"Now run back home like a good girl. No harm's done, and if you hop back to bed now no one will be any the wiser. I won't tell Papa."

Fanny sagged against the wall, pressing her palms to the rough stone. She did not move. Hildebrand began to be really irritated.

"Do be reasonable. I can't marry you. I've a wife already, somewhere or other. As for going away with me, it would be madness. I couldn't take you on the *Rosamund*, the crew wouldn't stand it. You'll thank me some day for keeping my head. We'd both be sick of the whole business in a month. I'm sorry it happened. I suppose I led you

on, but then I thought you were leading me on. You'll see the whole thing in its true light to-morrow. No harm's done."

He took her quite gently and propelled her toward the door of the store. He had spent the deuce of a lot of time over her, and was impatient to be gone. The moral evidently was "Stick to harlots, they don't stick to you." Neat that, he must remember it. Hildebrand opened the door and put Fanny's bundle in her hand.

"You're all right, aren't you?" he asked a little anxiously. "No bones broken, eh? You can depend on me, Miss Fanny? Good-bye, and we'll both forget this little indiscretion."

"Thank you," she said mechanically.

"Well, I'm damned!" he reflected, striding back to his boat, the glow of righteousness in his veins.

XII

Fanny felt her way across the store slowly and carefully, the great blank in which she stood moving with her. She mounted the stairs and lit a candle with slow, stumbling fingers. There was a core of silence in her brain, but the surface was working normally. There were things she must do—first take off the wet oilskins, then destroy the letter, then wipe and return the oilskins and put away the things, then, oh, then—nothing—nothing—for ever! It took a long time to do these things, but she did them methodically. Fanny sat down and took her head between her hands trying to think, or not to think. She shivered a little. "Must go to bed before Maud comes," mumbled her brain. She still wore the jersey and breeches; it came as a horrid shock to her. She began to lose her self-control. She tore off the badge of infamy, stared about her for a hiding-place, flung up a window and threw them as far out into the night and the rain as she could. Cold hours passed. She heard the great door shut to, the quartermaster's voice, hearty even at two in the morning, then hushed suddenly. Some one had evidently said, "Don't wake Fanny." Katie had come

in hours before, creaking past her door in a clumsy effort to be quiet.

Fanny pulled the clothes nearly over her head and lay still. Presently Maud tiptoed in and leant over her. She made no sign. Maud lit a candle, shielded the flame, and began to wrestle with the intricate fastenings of her gown. Fanny heard her little grunts and puffs as she twisted back and forth. She got the thing off and stepped out of ring after ring of petticoat, leaving them in circles on the floor. The light snuffed out. The crisis was passed.

In the morning Fanny felt very ill. She had shivered all night, and now she felt sick. She had been thinking, the numbness had lifted, and the bitterness of humiliation had begun to eat into her heart. Now she thought of nothing but driving off the deadly nausea that possessed her. She lay straight in her bed, neither moving nor thinking, just holding it off. She was glad she was ill.

Maud was bending over her.

"How are you, Fanny?"

"I'm ill."

Maud laid her hand on her brow.

"Don't."

"What's the matter? Is your head bad?"

"Yes, yes, I have brain-fever."

"But you are cold."

Maud gently drew down the sheet. If she had found a snake in the bed her expression of horror could not have been greater.

"Where is your hair?"

"I cut it off—my head, the pain!"

And Fanny began to laugh a little wildly.

"She must be mad," gasped Maud, and went for assistance. Katie came in.

"Well now, Miss Fanny, these are fine doings. I'll lay you've got a chill. I'll give you a good mustard plaster."

"I only want to be quiet."

"There, look at your poor hair, what a thing to do. I did ought to have stayed in last night. I wished I had, what with the rain coming on and spoiling the fireworks and my

young man getting drunk on the free beer, him being a Scotchy."

Maud came in with the quartermaster.

"Not too good to-day, Fan?" he inquired.

"No, Papa."

"Poor girl. You gave your sister a turn cutting off your hair like that. What about a drop of whisky to hearten you up?"

"No, thank you, Papa."

Maud uttered a little squeal—she had discovered the severed hair under the flounce of the dressing-table.

"Come now, we must do something for you. William has run down to the Battery to call Dr Palmer."

"I don't want a doctor, Papa. Don't make me see one, I'm not really ill."

"Oh, aren't you? What's the matter, then?"

"I feel ill. I'm not ill. I only feel like it."

"H'm!"

"Did you go out in the rain last night? The floor was all wet when I was getting undressed."

"No—yes—I did a little."

"Did something happen, Fanny? Why ever did you go out and get wet when you were ill?"

"I didn't get wet. I—I wanted air."

"But you must have got wet if you went out."

"Leave her alone till the doctor sees her, Maud."

The doctor came; he could find nothing much the matter with Fanny, and she did not help him. He thought she was suffering from shock, severe shock, and should be kept quiet and well nourished. He prescribed a sleeping powder, a tonic, and later perhaps a change of air.

"I don't like it," said the quartermaster to William. "What's he mean by shock?"

"It's the megrims," suggested William.

"Your sister doesn't have megrims. She's a sensible girl. There's something in this."

Benjamin came in with something dripping in his hands.

"One of the men just picked these up in the courtyard.

They are new out of stock." He held up a boy's jersey, belt, and breeches. "Some one has been at the bales; but, as far as I can see, nothing is missing. A set of oilskins has been dragged out and tucked back between two bales. The thief must have been disturbed, run off with these and dropped them in the yard."

"Leave them here, Benjamin, we won't go into it." Benjamin looked surprised.

When he had gone the quartermaster glanced significantly at William, gathered up the wet garments, and stumped upstairs.

Fanny opened her eyes to find him standing by her, holding the evidence. His face was creased with trouble, his manner chastened and nervous.

"Fanny," he said, "if you've come to any harm you had better tell me."

She looked at the clothes with wild, fascinated eyes.

"You've nothing to fear from me. You're my girl and I'll do my best for you. Only tell me, Fanny."

"I—I—don't, Papa."

"I'm your father, why can't you make a clean breast of it? What happened?"

"Nothing, Papa."

"Did some one frighten you?"

"Yes—no, Papa, won't you believe me? Nothing happened—nothing at all. If I made a mistake, I was silly. I want to forget it."

"If nothing happened, if you're not frightened and not ashamed of anything, what's the matter with you?"

"I'll be all right to-morrow."

"Now, Fanny, you'll feel better if you tell me."

Fanny closed her eyes and lay still. But she could not close her mind against the insistent questions that beat against her silence as a hammer beats on an anvil. They seemed to bruise her, body as well as mind. She could not evade them, could only hang on desperately to the last threads of her self-control. A name pierced through the numbness.

"Is it that man Hildebrand?"

"It has nothing to do with anyone but myself. There won't be any consequences of any kind."

"What did he say or do to you?"

"Papa, won't you stop?"

"Now, Fanny, you are only upsetting yourself; your business is my business. Out with it like a good girl. God! I wish you were a boy. Now, did you see Captain Hildebrand last night?"

The last threads were snapping now.

"Did you—— Maud! Katie! The girl's swooned. Oh, Lord; these women! Look at her there, she might be dead! And I only asked her a simple question."

Fanny came round to the smell of burnt feathers and many consoling exclamations. She fixed her sick eyes balefully on the quartermaster, who hovered on the edge of the group looking anxious, comical, and obstinate.

"Saving your presence, sir," said Katie, "I think you'd better go. There, poor lamb, drink this."

The quartermaster stamped out.

"These women are clannish. Mean trick fainting on me like that, just when I was getting somewhere."

Fanny lay through the morning and afternoon, listening to the common noises of the house, feeling like some one buried. From time to time she wondered with a sort of surprise what she was doing there, if she were really ill, if she really cared at all. She rather thought that she wasn't and didn't, but when she thought of getting up and facing the family it all came back. She clung to her illness as her only protection. With the doctor in attendance they could not plague her too much. The only thing she had left was pride. She could never be happy again, so she might as well use all her powers to save herself from becoming a figure of fun. No one should ever know the depth into which she had fallen. Her lips would wither, her heart would stop, if ever she tried to tell that story. She could not bear their pity, their tact, their solicitude. The tale would hang about her neck for ever. She would be referred to as, "You know, Miss Hyde, who tried to run away with the whaling-captain." No one would understand her

motives. She could hardly understand them herself, now they had been incredible.

Maud came in with a bowl of broth, her face drawn to a suitable sick-room expression.

"It's very strengthening, dear. Drink it, and you'll feel better."

Fanny felt she was being mocked with soup, but took it meekly. Maud lingered.

"You did provoke Papa this morning. He's like a bear with a sore head. It was odious of him plaguing you when you were ill. We've never had any secrets, have we? Tell me what happened, Fanny, and I vow I'll never tell a soul."

Fanny put aside her soup.

"Oh, can't you eat it?"

"I won't eat it while you question me."

"I wasn't—I only thought you'd like to tell me. Dear, dear Fanny, just whisper. I won't be shocked, no matter what it is. I'll stand by you if you'll only tell me. What can I do now if I don't know?"

Fanny turned her face to the wall.

"I know one thing, Captain Hildebrand was in it."

"How—oh——"

"So he was then, I thought so. Don't shield him, Fanny. He's not worth it, really he isn't. William says——"

"Go away," said Fanny hoarsely.

"But, Fanny——"

"Go away."

One glance at her sister's face, and Maud fled.

The next day Fanny determined to get up. It was too silly to stay in bed when she was not ill. She felt as if she had been ill, and wondered if she had imagined all that happened, if it had been delirium. She looked white and miserable. That angered her. "Silly fool!" she thought, and finding a red ribbon of Maud's dipped it in lavender water and dabbed her cheeks. She found a cap that almost covered her shorn hair. Thus she descended on Katie in the kitchen.

"Well, I never!" said Katie.

Fanny found several faults and retired with the honours of war to the parlour.

"Oh!" said the quartermaster, who was reading the *Herald*. "Better, eh? Come and sit down, my dear. I think you have something to tell me."

"Nothing, Papa."

"I think so."

"No."

"I've waited till you were well, but I'm going to have the truth now. What happened to you on Thursday night?"

The quartermaster banged his fist on the table so that the lustres tinkled.

"Well?"

"I am not going to tell you or anybody else anything, Papa, so it is no use plaguing me. I have a right to my own secrets. You can't make me."

"Can't I? I'll—I'll——"

"I am sorry, Papa."

They looked at one another, steel upon rock. He said heavily in the end, "I don't understand you, you're an unnatural girl." And then, in sudden anger, "Have it your own way. I've done what I can for you."

To the rest of the family he said, "Don't plague her," and closed the subject.

CHAPTER V

MAUD AT CAMDEN

It was impossible to ignore the cloud that hung over the family. Fanny was very difficult in those days. Maud and Katie were more than once reduced to tears by the sharpness of her tongue. The quartermaster felt uncomfortable and discomfited. William guarded his wounded family pride in a still closer reserve. The tension was becoming impossible when the doctor revived the suggestion of a change of air. The quartermaster seized upon the idea eagerly. Long discussions arose, which Fanny found very wearying, but Maud entered into them with avidity. It was decided that she should accompany Fanny. The Windmill Street household was to get on as best it could with Katie and a young niece of hers to help in the mornings.

Where did people go for their health? Very few people went anywhere. They stayed at home and got better, which was economical and sensible. There were no waters to drink. True, Manly was becoming a fashionable watering-place. Some of the more adventurous citizens were beginning to make an annual pilgrimage there with their families. A few advanced females were bathing, going down to the water's edge in bathing-boxes of striped canvas and stepping into the creaming waves in costumes of blue and white galatea frilled and braided at ankle and wrist. That was a palpitating adventure which Maud would have loved, but Manly was universally voted too public and too exciting for the patient. Every one had tacitly agreed that Fanny had been very ill and was now convalescent. It accounted for her hair. Maud even suggested rather maliciously that she should be shaved,

as that would be more realistic. The constant irritating attention and surveillance that they said her condition demanded, were a sort of punishment. Fanny hated being smoothed down and treated as if she were irresponsible. Her temper became short, but Maud bore it angelically. Fanny became infuriated when she heard her describing the malady to strangers in a sweet sisterly way, but was hardly in a position to show her feelings.

Mr Humphrey Gillam was a constant inquirer. He came with grapes and peaches, and once with a book of devotional character for the invalid, which Fanny felt definitely ranged her with the middle-aged. But his visits mainly consisted of talking to Maud. Maud naturally asked his advice about a place to stay. There was a good deal of whispering in a corner of the parlour. That evening Maud clamoured for a decision. The quartermaster appealed to William, who knew the country better than anyone.

"A farm would be nice," cooed Maud; "the cream and poultry and eggs would be so good for Fanny. A really nice farm, William."

William, who was extremely fastidious, did not think any farm he had seen really nice. The discussion degenerated into a wrangle between Maud and William, till the quartermaster grew impatient.

"Leave it to me," he cried. "I'll find you somewhere to go, and you'll have to be satisfied with it."

The next day it happened that Humphrey's call coincided with the hour the quartermaster took to read the *Herald*. He was shown into the parlour. Maud was engaged. Kind inquiries for the patient led naturally to a discussion of the country holiday. Humphrey, after earnest thought, opined that he knew a suitable place outside Camden, a farm owned by respectable people named Godling. He would make inquiries if the quartermaster wished. It was a most salubrious climate, a most retired spot. The matter was almost settled.

"The Gillams do themselves well," the quartermaster reflected. "It ought to be all right."

"Haven't the Gillams a place there?" inquired William that evening.

"Have they?" said Maud, opening her eyes wide. "I don't think they go there much."

It was arranged that the young ladies should go to Rose Farm immediately after Christmas, as that festive season was now at hand and only matters of the utmost urgency ever took anyone from home at that season.

II

The spirit of Christmas almost restored the peace of the Hyde family, which Fanny had so rudely disrupted. Fanny and Maud vied in instructing Katie, who was a poor colonial, in the art of making mince-pies, plum-puddings, and cakes of incredible heaviness and richness. William received a nice warm comforter knitted by the fair hands of his Adela in England, and the girls a Prayer Book and a letter of pious exhortation each from their aunt Sophia, who thought that every one going out to a new country should assume the character of a missionary.

A heat-wave struck Sydney on Christmas Eve, but no one could be persuaded to relinquish one jot of the Christmas festivities. Scarlet but unbowed, Katie and Fanny laboured in the kitchen. Panting and perspiring, Maud festooned the parlour with coloured papers and ropes of greenery. Almost fainting, she toiled up the town on William's arm, to make the last purchases.

"Oh, the heat, the heat!" she moaned. "I am sure to-morrow you will not be able to tell which is the turkey and which is me."

"I don't know how we are going to eat all that stuff. It is enough to kill us in this heat. I am sure a cold collation would be better suited to this climate."

"What!" they all cried. "Not keep up Christmas! What are you thinking of?" And they looked at William as if he had blasphemed his God, repudiated his country, and questioned the honour of his mother.

On Christmas Eve Jackie, having bewildered Maud

considerably by a series of amazing contortions, at last drew her into the courtyard, and pressed into her hand a three-cornered note. It read:

> Mamma has got wind, and I am to be packed off like a norty schoolboy, but am bearing up well. H.

It could not have been the felicity of phrase that so delighted Maud.

Benjamin Shirley, his sister Lucy who made bonnets, old Libby, Jem and his wife, George and Jackie, were all bidden to the Christmas dinner. It was only right, the quartermaster said. They came, of course, and the parlour was packed with sweating and uncomfortable humanity. Benjamin brought each of the young ladies a posy in a lace-paper folder, and was very sad because the shadow of Maud's departure was upon him. Poor fellow! Mrs Jem spilt the brandy sauce on him and made him conspicuous, and he got the button in the pudding, to every one's amusement, especially Maud's.

But Benjamin was to have his hour. Ever since the holiday had been mooted Maud had been coaxing her papa to give her a riding-habit. "What!" he said, "Will you ride a farm-horse? I don't call that looking after your sister."

But taking advantage of the Christmas spirit, of which there was no greater exponent than the quartermaster, she wheedled it out of him. A voluminous skirt of fine plum-coloured serge, worn over drill riding-trousers, a cambric jacket with puffed sleeves, a check cravat of silk surmounted by a pleated frill of white muslin, a silk top-hat, and white gossamer made up her costume. William gave her a crop with an ivory handle. Benjamin began an ode *To a beautiful Equestrienne.* Maud had never been on a horse in her life, and was eager to try her powers on Star. She tactfully waited till the quartermaster and William were out, then with the help of Jackie saddled and led her to the mounting-block. Star was not as impressed with the new habit as others had been. She mistrusted Maud

at once. Benjamin, rushing out of the office, was in time to see her desperately clutch at Star's mane, and to catch her almost swooning body as Star finally shook her off. It was his great moment. Often had he dreamed of doing something like this. To few dreamers of his kind is such fulfilment given.

III

Three days after Christmas the two young ladies departed for Camden in a closed carriage hired from the Tonbridge. William was to accompany them on horseback, and George was to take their effects packed in large wicker hampers on the wagon. They carried with them only a couple of bandboxes and a carpet-bag packed with necessities for the night they would spend on the way, and a flask of brandy in case of accidents. Every one came out of the store to watch them go, and Katie burst into tears to see her two young ladies set out on such a hazardous journey. Progress was slow at first across the Haymarket Gully and up the hill, but once past the toll-gate the horses pulled with a will.

It was not so warm, but very dusty as no rain had fallen since the night the *Rosamund* had sailed. In the hot, dark, leather interior of the carriage the girls sweltered in the dark serge frocks and green gossamers that were *de rigueur* for a journey. The smell of the dust was horrible. It penetrated the gossamers more easily than the air could. Fanny was apathetic. She saw no reason why she should be any happier at Camden than in Windmill Street. Between the heat and her recent shock, she was listless. Suffering had made her self-centred. She would not enter into any of Maud's plans, and could feel no interest in the adventure of travel and change. She could not think of anything in the world that she would care to have or to do. She lay back laxly in the carriage, blindly giving herself up to the discomforts of the journey. Maud wriggled and turned and tried to look out of the window. She was for ever poking her head out and calling to William, "Who lives in the big house, William? Is that the Cheshire Cheese? Oh, William, is that where they have those dreadful *fêtes à*

la Vauxhall? How I should love to go to one!" "Who was the gentleman you saluted?" "Oh, Fanny, look! Speed the Plough. Isn't that deliciously rural?" "William, do we turn off here?" "How far have we gone?" "What time is it?" till Fanny peevishly begged her to keep still.

They lunched at Perrins' Inn by the roadside. Hot sheeps' tongues, cold pork-pie, potatoes, and greens were piled together in a great mound on their plates, and a dessert of figs and cakes, washed down with cider, followed.

About sunset they came to the Covell Hostelry where they were to spend the night. It was a small place, rather forlorn and lonely, and the room to which the girls were shown was an unventilated wooden box. Walls, floor, and furniture were of yellow wood coated with varnish which had become slightly sticky in the heat. The homemade candles on the dressing-table were bent double with the heat, the one small window had to be propped open with a stick.

"Why did we come?" moaned Fanny.

But when they had washed, dabbed their foreheads and wrists with lavender water, and rejoined William who was walking in a garden of tall, wilted sunflowers, they felt better. A supper of bread and milk, eggs with brown bread, and candied honey was served to them on the veranda by the stout, shiny girl who had shown them their rooms.

"She is not as pretty as English chamber-maids are," said William, and they thought him very bold.

IV

On the morrow about midday they reached their destination. The family at Rose Farm constituted a little community in itself. The main house was flanked by the cow-yards, the stables, the fowl-run, and other outhouses straggling over a wide area. A quarter of a mile away was another house where other members of the family lived. The farm was prosperous, but to Maud's disappointed eyes it seemed poor and bare. She and Fanny had stayed once, when they were little girls, at a farmhouse in Devon, and its compact neatness, its fat cows and rich pastures,

and the old thatched farmhouse had remained in her memory as what a farm must inevitably be. Here there were no lanes made lovely with hedges of hawthorn, only a long dusty road running through the flat open land. There were no rich green fields rising in swelling undulations to a wooded knoll, but flat brown land against which the brown, wrinkled sheep could scarcely be seen. Most of it had been cleared, but here and there patches of gums still stood, living and dead. The sheep crowded under the shade of the trees to escape the burning sun. Maud, fearing for her complexion, wished she might follow their example, but not even vanity could restrain her curiosity and keep her quiet within the stuffy carriage.

But they were here now. Fanny, who had turned a deaf ear for many a long mile to Maud's running stream of exclamation and comment, was helped out first. A veritable Noah's Ark seemed to swarm from the buildings to watch the ceremony of dismounting. Two sheep-dogs rushed out from behind the stables, barking furiously, dividing their attention between the strangers and the sunburnt-tabby cat arching his back round a veranda post. A half-grown lad went to the horses' heads, vainly shouting the dogs into silence. Some inquiring fowls ceased from their casual pecking in the dry grass sloping away from the house on the right, while from the stable-loft a small black hen boldly but mendaciously proclaimed to the world that she had laid an egg. Five or six barefooted children—they seemed to Maud to be dozens, and all of an age—peeped inquisitively from the doors or windows of the buildings. Younger ones clung to the skirts of the two women who came out to meet them. A baby whimpered like some little animal in the arms of an older girl. William dismounted; stiffly ignoring the sensation caused by his buff riding-breeches, long coat-tails, and tall hat, he handed the bridle to the stable-boy and ceremoniously handed his sisters out. Mrs Godling hurried up—"young Mrs Bill" she was still called, though she was now a stout, comely matron of forty.

"Miss Hyde, ma'am, and Miss Maud, welcome to Rose Farm, ladies. You will be glad of a rest after your tiresome

journey. Don't mind those noisy dogs now, Miss Hyde. Their bark is worse than their bite, I always say. Bertha, take Victoria for me while I show the young ladies to their rooms. And Mr Hyde, will you please to follow?"

Talking volubly to cover her nervousness, she led her guests to their rooms.

Hot and wearied with the long journey in the stifling carriage, Fanny heard as in a dream Maud's voice chattering on, as she bathed the dust of her journey from her charming face and changed from her dark travelling-clothes into a lighter robe with ruffled skirt. Nothing could ever check Maud's flow of speech.

"Did you see the old, old lady, Fanny? However old can she be, do you think? And all the children! I do not think they can all be Mrs Godling's, do you? Little Victoria was rather sweet, do you not think so? Oh, Fanny, it is hot! This room seems to suck up the heat, I am sure."

The room was hot, but rather attractive nevertheless. It was long and low, its pine ceiling charmingly irregular in height. Originally two rooms had been built and later knocked into one, so that there was more window space than was considered necessary at that time. From the window they could see the orchard, and farther, beyond a stretch of grey, grassy fields, to where a brown slab house stood among some shapely sugar-gums. Maud sniffed the air appreciatively, savouring through the heavy smell of dust the lovely warm scent of hay and dry grass in the sun.

"Fanny, love," she cried, "do come and look. I am sure this will do you good." But Fanny was perverse and languid, and would not look.

Later, as they sat down to the hearty midday meal, they met the rest of the family, and though it was some days before Maud was really certain she had them all sorted out, she now grasped the guiding principle of the thing. In the farmhouse proper lived old Mrs Godling—"Gran" the whole family called her—an incredibly old woman, who with her husband and young family had been among the earliest free settlers in the colony. She was a little childish now, living in the past, fretful, and loving to talk of the hardships

of her middle life. Her eldest son, master of the farm for twenty-five years now, was devoted to her. Young Mrs Bill was his second wife, but there was a gap of only four years between Bertha, the youngest child of his first marriage, and Tom, the eldest offspring of his second union. His eldest son, George, worked the farm with him, and was away at present with the wagons, carting the summer's produce to the Sydney markets and laying in stores for the coming months. Only three of the younger children came to the table, and Maud wondered if they had their meals in relays. She learned, however, that the absentees belonged to the Tim Godlings, Mr Godlings' younger brother and his wife, who lived in the slab house she had seen from their window. It was the original homestead to which Gran had come when they had first taken up their land.

The meal was an uncomfortable one, despite the abundance of good food on the table. Old Mrs Godling was aggrieved that guests should have been brought to the house without consulting her. She muttered continuously, and Mr Godling, though courteous to the Hydes, devoted himself to soothing her. Young Mrs Bill was nervous, and the children restless. William was stiff and ill at ease, and Fanny had elected to remain in her room. Only Maud was happy. Her happiness bubbled and effervesced inside her. She felt that she loved them all. Only the thought of Fanny sobered her, poor Fanny, lying alone, sick and unhappy. "Oh, how could anyone in the whole world feel unhappy?" cried Maud.

V

William rode away, and the girls had a fleeting moment of panic. They felt very far away from the familiar life of the store. Fanny out of perversity stayed indoors and Mrs Godling brought her possets at all hours and talked to her about the ailments of the family, suitable and interesting conversation for an invalid. Maud settled quickly into life on the farm. One of her first inquiries was, "Could I get a ladies' hack anywhere and learn to ride?"

Mr Godling twinkled, "Funny thing, miss. Young Mr Humphrey up to Gillam Park came down yesterday with Lady Gray, saying she wanted exercise, and he'd give the boys something if they'd take her condition down a bit. Don't see why you shouldn't use her. She's a beautiful little animal, gentle as a dove."

Maud loved Lady Gray, she was as gentle as a dove. She learned to ride in the paddock behind the willows, with Tom, aged twelve, to teach her and a mob of children to watch. She fell off into a juicy clump of dock and got a green stain on her habit. The children laughed, and Maud, after a rueful moment, laughed too, and remounted Lady Gray. Soon she was trusted on a longer ride with Tommy as her bodyguard and willing slave. In these days Maud was blossoming into a new loveliness.

Maud peeped into the room where Fanny still lay, her face turned to the window overlooking the orchard. She said, "Do you want me, Fanny?" and Fanny said no, she didn't want anybody. So Maud went out riding with a light heart, having done her duty. Lady Gray walked delicately upon the grass by the roadside, to be out of the dust.

"What is the white house behind the trees on the hill, Tommy?"

"That's Gillam Park, miss."

"Oh, is it? And is it a big house?"

"Yes, miss, and there's Mr Humphrey on the drive."

Humphrey came to meet them as they passed the park gates. He had discarded the conventional dress of town and wore a light foulard suit and a broad-brimmed hat with streamers. Maud thought that he had indeed an air.

"Miss Maud!" he cried; "this *is* a pleasure! And how is your patient?"

"She is improving, thank you."

"Tom, run up to the stables, there's a good fellow, and tell them to saddle Sunbeam for me. Or, better still, I'll take your nag and place. We mustn't keep Miss Maud waiting." Then, as the lad hesitated, "I'll bring her back safe and sound. Go up to the house, and Mrs Mullins will give you a cake."

"I didn't invite you to come."

"But you wanted me."

"I don't know."

"Don't spoil it, Maud, I haven't seen you for nearly a week."

"Poor Humphrey, I don't mind, then."

They rode up the little hill and down again and across the gentle plain between the yellow pastures, here and there a long rick, here and there a clump of trees, turpentines or gums. The red road was furrowed by old rains and old cart-wheels, the soft, thick dust rose up behind them in a cloud and settled on the shrubs at the roadside. Crazy stone walls wound out across the paddocks in an inarticulate pattern. Humphrey told her about the country, that it was good grassland, and the centre of the sheep industry, that it had been settled for many years, that the Godlings were among the pioneers, that some day Australia would all be like this, a great pasture. Maud could see that he loved the country. They turned and looked back over the way they had come and were surprised to find it so far. Tom was waiting where they had left him. Each sighed, then smiled to hear the other sigh.

"To-morrow?"

"I don't know, it depends on Fanny."

"I'll wait every day, dear Maud."

"I'll try to come."

Maud was late for dinner and Tommy was chidden. She found, when she looked in the mirrior, that the sun had burned her nose and cheeks to a brilliant red. The rest of the day was spent in dabbing them gingerly with cream, which Mrs Godling said was good for sunburn, and in asking Fanny if she thought it was any better.

"Maud, you are vain. What does it matter?"

VI

Fanny, trailing listlessly out to the orchard with a cushion and a copy of Miss Burney's *Evelina* in her hands, came upon Gran sitting bolt upright in her accustomed corner on the

veranda. Her eyes were closed, and her lips mumbled a little, indistinctly. The old woman drew Fanny's languid interest, she seemed so old that all feeling must surely have been drained out of her. Fanny shivered a little and would have passed on, but the old woman's eyes had opened, and she was looking at Fanny with a faintly malicious expression. "You may triumph now," the look said. "Your turn will come, sooner than mine, worse than mine—I have my sons." But the old husky voice merely said, "Sit down, young lady, and talk to an old woman." Fanny hesitated, then sat down. She might as well sit there and be wearied by an old woman's gossip as sit in the orchard and be wearied by the social adventures of that tiresome *Evelina*.

Gran was happy now that she had found a new listener. It seemed to her that nowadays the young people did not realize or appreciate what the old folk, the pioneers, had done for them. They sat back and idled, and took for granted all the comforts she had had to go without or win by heart-breaking toil. What did they know about hardships? They were soft. She had lived comfortable once. It was not as if she had not known what comfort was. They'd always had a good home, but Mr Godling was seized with the itch for trying his luck in the new country, he was always one for new things, so they had sold up their home and come to New South Wales. In her old cracked voice Gran told Fanny of the voyage out.

"It was the year 1797 and we came in the *Mary Alice*. I called my Alice after her, because she was born on her just off the Cape. It was a bad time, but Alice, she was never lucky all her life. Mr Godling looked after the others, he was a good hand with children, though he wasn't a handy-man, not as a rule. Bill takes after him." The old woman's voice went on, retelling in homely phrase and disjointed sequence her saga of privation and endurance. Fanny, caught despite herself by some quality of the story, saw through the rambling, rather querulous narrative a whole epic of endurance and heroism: men and women making the great decision, eighteen or more interminable weeks in an over-crowded ship, scanty food hardly eatable as the weeks

went by, the tiny band of free men unwelcome in a population of convicts and their warders, the breaking of the virgin soil, the building of a home. When she brought her attention again to the old lady the story had changed. She was talking of the convicts who had been assigned to them for the farm-work, confused stories that seemed sometimes to run twenty years into a single day. Fanny could not associate Gran's homely stories of these men with the ugly stream that sometimes passed along Windmill Street to Cockatoo and sent her shuddering from the windows. Though there had often been trouble enough here, everything seemed so much less tragic and hideous, more cheerful and homely, sometimes even comic.

On Sundays the girls walked across the farm to the church. They had to stop and pick the grass-seeds out of their stockings and the hems of their gowns. It was farther than they had thought. From the farm, the steeple had looked quite close. They had to hurry because it was getting late, the last bell had begun to ring. The grass was brown with a silver sheen, the paddocks wide and open, the sky pale, and all between was filled with a shimmering, jelly-like heat. Maud would have loved to fling herself down on the ground and rest. She knew she would feel the earth beating in time to her heart.

"Doesn't the earth feel alive here?" said Maud.

"Yes," said Fanny. "Don't you think we might leave off our wadded petticoats here? None of the girls at the farm wear them."

The church was dark, the congregation scanty, the vicar lean and savage, a Savonarola with a phlegmatic and drowsy congregation. Maud tried to read the inscriptions on the brass tablets round the walls. Fanny thought of her own affairs. Sometimes she thought of the terrible abyss down which she had so nearly fallen. Sometimes she drove her nails into her palms in bitterness and fury at the memory of her humiliation, but hardest to bear were the times when she felt neither bitterness nor anger nor fear, but only the heart-breaking consciousness that she had lost faith and love. She could never love anyone again, not as she had

loved Hildebrand, because she could never trust again—"our life built up on the faith of those we love."

An electric shudder ran through the congregation. The vicar was repeating his text, "For I was born free." Heads were turned to the north side of the church, starched petticoats murmured like the sea, subsiding into repose.

After service, as the congregation was drifting out, a lane suddenly opened in the little crowd and through it came a fat, red-faced man in a flowered waistcoat, upon his arm his florid spouse in damask and gold chains. Maud distinctly heard a titter, and after they had passed a rush of comment.

"Looks a bit nettled, don't he?" remarked one ancient to another.

"Sarves him right."

"My dear," whispered a matron, "did you ever hear the like? Unbecoming in church, I must say. I am *that* glad I didn't stay at home."

Outside Humphrey Gillam leaned on the church wall. He saluted the ladies.

"Not at church, Mr Humphrey?" cried Maud, frowning at him. Fanny bowed coldly.

"Alas! I was too late. I have been reading the headstones instead. They are most edifying. Sermons in stones, you know."

"La! you are morbid."

She retailed to him the incident in the church and inquired eagerly what it all meant. Humphrey laughed.

"That will be the Altons. They are terrible snobs, but every one knows old Alton, this man's father, served his time, and his wife was no better. They quarrelled with the parson about their pew, and this is his revenge."

And so home to roast duck and dumplings.

VII

Fanny gradually came out of her retirement. She was naturally of an active disposition and she was drawn almost imperceptibly into the steady routine of life on the farm.

She was surprised to find the farm so large, busy, and

prosperous. The straggling exterior belied its inward efficiency. Mrs Godling, when she found she was interested, was pleased to show her everything. She rose early to see the girls, Rosa, Ellen, and Bertha, milking the cows. She loved the long dairy where the milk was set out to cool in shallow, circular pans, the churns where the butter was made. She went with Bertha to the poultry-runs, and scattered wheat grown on the farm to the rather mongrel collection of fowls. She penetrated the larder, stored for a year, and learned many housewifely recipes for the making of soap and candles, jams and preserves. The orchard was full of fruit, waiting to be preserved. The little boys picked it and drove the birds from the laden trees. Even now the hot, rich smell of damson jam came from the kitchen where Ellen was busy at the range, singing as she stirred. "This is our busy time," explained Mrs Godling, "though goodness knows there's not much difference between the busy time and the slack."

"Is it not a very hard life?" Fanny wanted to know.

"I don't know, it's what I've always done. I used to live over to Cobbitty with my pa, and run his place before I married Mr Godling. It don't seem no more than what God meant us females to do—making the children and the food and the clothes and tending the beasts."

Fanny was fascinated. She could feel the steady rhythm of the work going on, the fertility of the farm, the fertility of work. These women had something in their lives that never deserted them, that outlasted love and romance, and that was their creative power. She was sure they were happier than she, more contented, though their lives often seemed very hard. "It's only people like Maud and me, who have no definite enduring work in our lives, who think love's going to be everything. It isn't everything, it's only a little bit, and when we try to believe it's everything, and build on that, we come to grief. I wonder if they would let me stay here helping on the place? But I couldn't ask them that, they wouldn't want an outsider. Perhaps Papa would let me help him. I know I could do anything that Benjamin does, or William. It's silly trying to pretend that I'm

nothing but a sort of doll. I'm not a doll, and I can't be caught with the old tale about love."

So Fanny began to console herself and to plan her life anew. She grew to realize that only a small portion of her possible world had fallen in, that she still had herself, and that every intelligent person is a very mine of fertility. She would do something and forget. But that night it all came flooding back, the anguish, the frustration, the humiliation —and Fanny cried into her pillow. In the morning the cheerful, busy sounds of the dairy revived her inspiration.

Fanny soon guessed that it was unusual for the Godlings to take strangers into their home and that it was only at Mr Humphrey Gillam's instance that they had been received. This vexed her considerably, and she blamed Maud, not without justice.

"I feel we are intruders here," she wound up.

"I don't, I think every one is most kind. I am sure I don't know why you will not accept a favour from Humphrey —he took the trouble to get us somewhere comfortable to stay, and now you're ungrateful."

"I see," said Fanny coldly, "that Mr Humphrey Gillam can do no wrong."

Fanny envied Maud the ease with which she won over everybody in the house. Fanny often worked with the girls now during the morning hours, but it was to Maud that they confided their love affairs, and Maud who showed them how shawls were worn in town that year, or how to make over their gowns to a more fashionable cut. More resentfully still, Fanny despised as vulgar Maud's still easier conquest of the boys on the place. She had reduced George Godling to a state of blushing imbecility in an evening. His grins and blushes enraged Fanny, she thought it disgusting that Maud should be able to reduce to these straits a shrewd and competent man of splendid physique, merely by smiling at him.

When she stopped to think Fanny was a little alarmed by the gulf widening between herself and Maud. But she could not bridge it, and Maud scarcely noticed it. She had grown used to Fanny's 'queerness' in the last few weeks, and was at present very much occupied with her own affairs.

VIII

Maud had never been so free in her life before. Fanny seemed to have lost interest in her and made only the most cursory inquiries about the daily rides. Maud's conscience no longer reproached her when she left Fanny, for she thought her sister much improved in health and spirits. Fanny was taking a keen interest in the work of the farm and spent much of her day doing tiresome things in the dairy or still-room. The secrecy of her meetings with Humphrey troubled Maud a little, but never for long. They happened so naturally and easily. Humphrey had probably bribed Tommy in some way, but he had had the delicacy to do it out of Maud's presence. They were reticent and unobtrusive rather than secret. More than once it was on the tip of her tongue to confide in Fanny; she had never kept a secret from her before. But this was a new Fanny, and Maud dreaded her coldness far more than anything she might do to stop their affair.

Maud was rather surprised at herself, she had grown so serious-minded, and sometimes she was sad. At other times she was very gay indeed, and would romp with the children. Then she would stop and think, "I've never been so happy in my life," and quite suddenly she would be sad. Or she would be leaning on the slip-rails watching the sunset, and thinking how beautiful and splendid it was, and how she had come to love the scorched countryside that had seemed so uninteresting at first—and her sadness would come upon her like the shadow of a cloud on the grass or like the turning of a leaf in her heart. Her throat would ache. She would hug and kiss the baby Victoria or even fling her arms round Lady Gray's neck, kissing the gentle, friendly muzzle as an outlet for her pent emotions. When George Godling told her about the drought when there had been no grass, very little water even for family use, and no fodder to buy even if they'd been willing to pay gold for it, and the sheep died and the crows came in clouds and picked their eyes out, and the horses grew too weak for work and as thin as skeletons, she burst into tears and sobbed

wildly. When old Daisy, the pet cow, followed her in the hope of an apple or a thistle she imagined she was being chased by a bull and fled. Every one had been very amused and Maud joined in the laughter at first, but became hysterical and had to be given sal volatile. But when she was out riding with Humphrey she was calm and happy, only afterwards she was always tired and came in dusty and drooping.

One day, when the weather was delightful, Mrs Godling suggested they should take lunch with them and eat it "like a sundowner on the wallaby." Maud was mystified, but said she thought it would be very nice. They had not gone far when Tommy pointed out a dusty figure slouching along the road ahead of them, a bundle in a knotted handkerchief suspended on a stick over his shoulder.

"There's a sundowner humping his bluey," he said.

Maud shaded her eyes. "But," she said in disappointment, "he isn't on his wallaby now."

Tommy doubled up with laughter.

"I'll ask Humphrey," she thought, and let Tom laugh.

Presently Humphrey appeared with a bulging saddle-bag, something like the neck of a bottle protruding from it. Maud's quick eyes fastened on it at once. "How did you know?" He smiled at her teasingly. "I know everything you do."

"You bold man, now I shan't do it." But she had no heart for teasing him, and did not keep him in his place at all.

That day they took Tommy and rode right across the plain to the fringe of bush that the settlers had driven back. Few had discovered yet that the ragged Australian bush was beautiful, and to Maud, remembering an English copse, it seemed almost comic. Everything was a joke, the ants, the thorny bushes, the flies and stinging midges.

"No," said Humphrey, "it's cruel. Imagine thousands of square miles of this, every mile exactly the same. It frightens you by being so big and so unchanging. If you are lost you walk round in circles till you go mad or die of thirst."

"Oh," said Maud, "don't! It just looks as if it didn't matter much."

They sat down to a meal in discomfort and mirth, and ate their hard-boiled eggs, brown bread, and the chicken Humphrey had brought.

"This is the first meal we have ever had together, Maud."

"So it is. How strange we should have it here."

He poured out a mug of wine. "To our very good fortunes." He sipped it and handed it to Maud. She sipped, looking at him solemnly over the rim. Then he poured the remainder on to the thirsty ground. "That's a libation," he said. They were curiously close in that moment. Then they gave their crumbs to the ants and rode home.

One day they were caught in a sudden thunder-shower, and took refuge in the crumbling remains of a mud-hut. The walls were thick, the bark roof showed many gaps. The walls were crumbling and bowed so that the whole structure seemed on the point of melting back into the ground. They tethered their horses to an old pepper-tree against the wall, where they would be a little sheltered, and huddled together on a small patch of dry ground in the one room the hut boasted. The place seemed older than it could have been and was given over to spiders. The rain hemmed them in with a curtain of silver rods. The sky showed black through the rents in the roof. Maud took off her hat, and Humphrey wrapped her in his riding-cloak to protect her from drips and splashes. They stood close together, looking out at the rain. A deep melancholy came on Maud.

"Talk to me, Humphrey."

"Dear, dear Maud," he said in a hoarse voice, "we must think of something." She nodded, with her head against his breast. "We can bear anything but being separated, can't we?" Again she nodded. They kissed for the first time, and did not mind the rain any more.

Another day Humphrey wanted to show her the house at Gillam Park. Maud hesitated, but reflected that they were practically affianced. She knew well enough that Fanny would not approve.

The house was not large, but elegantly proportioned, a colonial house in the Georgian style, built some fifteen years before when Mr Gillam brought off his first big business transaction. It was of stone, with high, arched windows, a pillared portico, and semicircular step.

"Papa," Humphrey explained, "always wanted to be a landed gentleman, but when he had built this house he found he did not care for country life, and that his interests kept him in Sydney. Evelina used to be sent here quite often, because she was delicate and the doctor thought the country air would do her good. I came too because I liked it. Adelaide generally had to look after us, and nearly spoilt everything because she was so vexed at being sent into the country. You will love Evelina, she is a sprightly girl when you know her, but very retiring in public."

"I know I shall love her. I do now—and Miss Adelaide is so beautiful."

"Addie will be an old maid and plague us all. She's so proud she'll never find a man good enough to marry."

Humphrey talked freely about his family. "I am so ashamed, dear Maud, that Mamma should be so unreasonable. If she knew we were together here I think she would die. When it has to do with any of us Papa always agrees with her. It will make our marriage difficult."

"Why does your mamma dislike me so."

"It is not your fault, rest assured. It would be the same no matter whom I wished to marry. She could never bear my looking at any female."

They sighed and smiled and sighed again, wandering hand in hand from room to room. "I'll have some nice cheerful flowered chintzes in here," thought Maud, "and blue velvet curtains in the dining-room instead of those dingy old red ones."

IX

"Where are you taking me?" asked Maud.

"To Cobbitty." Humphrey pointed over the fields to a spire three miles away. "There's something there I want to show you."

Maud was instantly curious, and plagued him to tell, but he would not. She was surprised when he drew up at the church gate and lifted her down.

"It's inside," he said.

They walked through the graveyard where men had been buried since 1815, and into the little dark, ivy-covered church.

"What is it?"

"It's an altar, Maud darling."

"Oh, but——"

"It's where people get married. I hope we are going to get married here. Would it do?"

"Yes, Humphrey."

"Say it now, precious."

"Say what?"

"Say—I, Maud Helena, take thee, Humphrey Everard Bassington——"

"O—oh! Humphrey, no! It wouldn't be right. It would be sacrilege."

"Goose! I want to hear you say it when there's nobody else to hear. Say it, Maud."

"I, Maud Helena—no, I can't. Don't make me, Humphrey."

"Would you say it to-morrow before a parson?"

"Humphrey, you frighten me. It is all a horrid joke."

"I was never more in earnest. Let us get married first and have the fuss after."

"Come outside, Humphrey, we can't talk in here."

In the graveyard Humphrey persuaded her. She was to set out for her ride the next morning as usual and come to the church. The clergyman would have the witnesses and they would be married quietly but finally. Humphrey had all the necessary papers—he had sent privily to Sydney for them the day after they were caught in the rain. At last they went to the Rectory and made arrangements. It was then four o'clock. On the morrow at eleven they would be married.

X

It was half an hour since Fanny had seen Maud ride away with Tom beside her. George had lifted her into the saddle and received no more than an unprovocative "Thank you." "Maud is not so flighty as she used to be, thank goodness," thought Fanny.

A sociable drew up at the gate and set down Mrs Bill's sister, a jolly widow who now kept their father's place at Cobbitty, then continued its journey to Camden.

"I've a bit of news for you this morning," she announced before she was properly into the house, "or maybe you know all about it. Who do you think is to be married, Molly? You'll never guess. Whatever his mamma will say I don't know, so quiet and all."

"Whoever is it, Emily?" said Mrs Bill impatiently.

"I was just telling you. As I was coming along I met Miss Nellie, and we were clacking a bit, poor girl. Then she says 'I must get along. Pa's got a wedding at eleven and he wants me for witness.' 'Whose wedding?' says I. You'll think me a curious woman, I'm afraid, Miss Hyde, but you must talk about your neighbours in the country. 'Whose wedding?' says I. 'That's a funny thing,' says she, 'but it's Mr Humphrey Gillam from Gillam Park.' The lady's name she couldn't rightly remember, but she was a sprightly young female and very handsome. Oh, la! What have I said?" she cried, becoming aware of the startled silence into which her words had been falling.

Fanny was very calm. "Can I have a carriage of any kind? I must go after her."

Only a farm-cart was forthcoming, and in that Fanny was presently jolting toward Cobbitty. There was little hope of being in time, especially as the cart had to go the long way by road. Never a word said Fanny to the wretched George on the plank beside her. She was humiliated by Maud's deceitfulness, and bitterly angry. As Fanny descended unaided from the cart Humphrey led his bride down the church steps. Seeing Fanny, Maud left her new husband, rushed to her sister and flung her arms round her neck.

"I see I am too late," said Fanny, disengaging herself. "I knew you were foolish, but I never suspected you of deceit, you wicked girl."

"I didn't dare to tell you. Oh, Fanny!"

"I don't suppose you did. I've been a fool of course."

Maud was genuinely frightened by Fanny's blazing eyes and white face. Tommy, becoming aware of the scene, raced to his horse and rode off in search of an alibi. Fanny climbed back on to the cart, George uttered no word, but obediently shook his reins. Maud held out her arms, tears running down her cheeks, but Fanny drove off with a dignity that outweighed her odd equipage.

XI

The young couple were marooned at Gillam Park. Maud dared not return to the farm, Humphrey dared not return to his home and mother. They both felt a little guilty and apprehensive, but on the whole were very happy and incredibly foolish.

Maud conceived the idea of returning to the store. "Fanny," she expounded, "will have to wait at the farm till William comes for her. She will send word at once, but we could easily get to Papa before she arrives."

Humphrey had ridden up to Camden, so there was only a somewhat aged cab-phaeton to convey them back to Sydney. It was not a very suitable vehicle, but it brought them to the store on the afternoon of the following day.

The quartermaster was at the door talking to William when they arrived. "Lord save us!" he cried, "here they are." Then before they could attempt an explanation he burst into a roar of laughter, slapping the sheepish Humphrey on the back.

"God bless me, boy! Your ma will have a fit when she hears of this."

BOOK II

THE CITY ROAD

CHAPTER VI

ADELA

It was January, 1844. Adela was to arrive in Sydney in three months' time, and she and William were to be married almost at once. No one of the household at Windmill Street seemed to know quite how it had been arranged, and secretly each of the trio dreaded her coming.

To the quartermaster, who had never seen her, Adela had always been no more than a name, but a name by which William gauged and condemned his father's habits and speech. Though he did not let the thought weigh heavily on him amid the thousand real cares of his busy life, yet when he thought of it at all he thought of her coming with a vague feeling of uneasy distaste.

Fanny's feeling went far deeper. There was no one to whom she could confide her thoughts, and, indeed, she would never have done so. Her father, genial and indulgent as he was, had little sympathy with feminine whims, and Maud was now too overflowingly prosperous and happy to be admitted into her sister's secret bitterness. A reconciliation had been patched up between the two girls, but Fanny felt that Maud was irrevocably cut off from her by her married state, and Maud could never quite forget the implacable face at the church gate. At first the situation had not been hopeless. A word might have resolved it, but Fanny was constitutionally unable to achieve an impulsive and generous gesture and Maud made too many.

To Fanny Adela's coming meant that the last thing she possessed would be snatched from her. She was now in

her twenty-sixth year and she was fully persuaded that she would never marry. The failure of her only love in humiliation and bitter shame, together with what she persistently regarded as the loss of her sister, had left a great blank in her life. When the excitement of preparing Maud's post-nuptial *trousseau*, and of settling her in the house at Balmain, which was Mr Gillam's wedding present, was over, she found her life practically empty. She had not forgotten her idea of asking her father for work in the store, and choosing her time carefully, had approached him in the office. Fanny was never one to beat about the bush, and she had opened fire at once.

"Papa, I should like to help you in the store—is there not something I could do?"

The quartermaster had looked mildly surprised.

"We're pretty slack at present, my dear, I don't think there's anything."

"I don't mean to-day only, Papa, but regularly. I haven't enough to do, and I can't be happy without something definite."

"Haven't you the house to see to, and all your little fal-lals?—you used to seem busy enough. I'll get that dull dog William to take you to more parties if you like."

"I dislike parties, Papa, and as for fal-lals, as you call them, they don't interest me. And Katie can do the housekeeping. Can't you understand, I want to be some use?"

"Hoity-toity! What use do you think you could be here, miss?"

Fanny had stuck to her guns.

"I'm not stupid, Papa. I could help you, really I could. I could do what William does, I am sure: I've heard you say yourself that I'd have been a good son."

"Now don't get all worked up, girl. I don't say you mightn't be some use, but womenfolk have no place in a business. And a handsome girl like you ought to be getting married."

"I shall not marry, Papa."

"We'll see about that. There may be nobody at present,

but just wait till a handsome young fellow comes along pouf! and you're off."

"Why can't you think of anything but marriage for a poor female?" Fanny had cried in vexation.

"Now you've just given me a good reason why I shouldn't take you into the business. You lose your temper too quickly—never do to get excited in business. I tell you, Fanny, I don't believe in petticoats in business, and I never shall."

So Fanny had gone away without another word, the quartermaster shouting jocularly after her, "Don't despair, lass, I'll find you a husband yet."

Fanny had shut her mind against hope in that direction, and had devoted her energies passionately to the perfection of her housewifely talent. She had directed and supervised the entirely competent Katie. The old bare rooms at Windmill Street could never become beautiful, but Fanny had wrapped herself in them and made them hers. Now she had to leave them.

For William had triumphed at last. He had insisted that Adela could not be brought to the rooms above the stores, and though the quartermaster grumbled he had yielded easily enough. For William's partnership, at first but a name, had become in some form a reality. The quartermaster was still the supreme figure and always would be, setting his hand to more and more daring enterprises, savouring his power, loving his growing wealth, absorbed in the new possibilities he saw on every hand. But William's genius lay in finance. He had no love for the business, but it was there, and he had mastered it. He dreaded his father's excursions into every field of commerce, though he was compelled to admire their success. His sound caution had proved a useful brake on the quartermaster's activities, and James Hyde had been forced to acknowledge its usefulness in the financial crisis of the previous year, when the Bank of Australia had failed. He had grown to rely not a little on William's judgment, though he would not admit it even to himself, and scoffed loudly at his son's pedantic caution.

"You're all right in a crisis, boy," he said once, "but

trade is not all crises, and now's the time to strike out while the rest are still too scared to move."

Still, William had won his place in the firm of James Hyde and Son, and the quartermaster was too just to refuse what William now pressed as a right. It was good, too, for his credit in the business world, to show that he could lord it among the best of 'em, and he'd keep a room in Windmill Street ready so that he could sleep there when he wanted to. Yes, looked at all round, he thought a move was the best thing they could do. Fanny had urged that the new house should be for William and Adela alone.

"It is right that they should have their home to themselves," she said; but her heart cried, "I must keep my dominion here, or I shall be lost. It is all I have."

The quartermaster's blank opposition had found an unexpected ally in William. He had felt it as important to his social standing in the colony that his father and sister should not live over the store as that he and his wife should not do so. Though he may have thought longingly once or twice of escape from his father, he felt that his standing in the new home, himself a married man, his wife directing the household, would be very different from his present position. And in his heart of hearts William felt he would be grateful for the presence of some familiar figures in the home which he was preparing for his bride.

For to William more than to anyone else, Adela's coming was a strange and disturbing event. No other love had ever displaced her image in his heart. But that image had become unreal, a shrine remote and unvisited. No increased urgency on his part had brought his wooing to a climax. He had continued to write in the five years of his exile from England letters of a restrained and gentlemanly ardour. He reiterated his faith that time would unite him to his Adela, that Fate, which now so cruelly separated them, must relent. His words ran now in the grooves that custom had made for them. His marriage had remained for him in the distant future where he first had to view it. Now that through no effort of his, so it seemed, it had come to such close quarters, William half resented, half apprehensively welcomed, the

change his marriage must bring. Adela seemed to belong so essentially to the English life of his boyhood, which he had coloured with the glamour of some Golden Age, that her advent into the crude reality of to-day seemed the loss of something fine and precious. The real Adela had no existence in his mind, but he prepared to greet her and to wed her with a suitable degree of warmth and kindness, and to shield her as far as possible from any harsh contact with life.

II

To Adela Gage the long journey to New South Wales, tremendous event as it was, was in no way unexpected or strange. It was the natural and inevitable outcome of her wooing five years before by the handsome and diffident young man to whom she had given her heart. She had assured him then that, though her parents could forbid their marriage now, no one could prevent it when she was of age. She had refused her word to her father when he demanded her promise not to correspond with William, but had consented to a restriction of their letters and had refrained from mentioning his name to her parents when she saw that it distressed them. Mr Gage had been satisfied that time and distance would wipe William's image from his daughter's mind.

But Mrs Gage had read Adela better. Her own quiet tenacity gave her the clue to her daughter's heart. She had done nothing to alter her husband's decision at first, because Adela was far too young to face that dreadful voyage, and also because she had not greatly cared for the young man. For a long time she had said nothing either to her husband or to Adela. She had quietly watched over Adela's life, had occupied her very fully in the precious routine of her home, withdrawing herself that Adela might feel the interest and delight of responsibility. She had seen that Adela took her part in the decorous social round that her father's position made desirable, and that opportunities of an advantageous marriage should not be lacking. But the unspoken confidence that lay between mother and daughter,

the deep bond of nature, had convinced her, even before they spoke of it, that when the time came she must lose Adela to that unknown land to which her lover had reluctantly been forced. The conviction lay unspoken between them for a long time, and in the interval Lionel Gage had almost forgotten William's existence. He was a shrewd and prosperous merchant, generous to those who pleased him, but irascible and domineering in manner, hasty in judgment, but very hard to dislodge from any position he had once taken up. He was perfectly satisfied with the dismissal of Adela's girlish love affair, and when Mrs Gage revived the subject in a matter-of-fact way he was genuinely bewildered.

An eminently desirable suitor for Adela's hand had appeared with irreproachable proposals for the marriage settlements, and Mr Gage opened the subject to his wife in a tactful and genial way.

"It's time our young lady was married, eh, Mrs Gage? We don't want an old maid left on our hands, do we?"

"Adela is waiting till she is twenty-one, Lionel. In fact, I think we should persuade her to wait even a little longer as it is so very far."

"What do you mean? What is so far? And what's all this about waiting?"

"To New South Wales, Lionel, to young William Hyde, of course. Surely you have not forgotten?"

Mr Gage snorted.

"Fiddlesticks! She's not still hankering after that fellow."

"She has never thought of anyone else. But of course you know that, Lionel."

"I never heard of anything so preposterous, the deceitful little minx."

"No, no, you must not say that. Adela has never deceived us in her life."

"What do you call all this but deceit?" he shouted.

"But you knew they corresponded, Lionel. You yourself agreed that they might be allowed to write once a quarter. And you have seen the letters come. Have they ever exceeded that allowance?"

"I don't know what you have been thinking of, ma'am, to let the matter go on. Send her to me and I'll tell her once and for all it must stop!"

He did tell Adela so, not once and for all, but many times. For a time the family peace was rudely shattered. Even Mrs Gage wondered at Adela's tenacity. It was stronger even than she knew. Only the strongest inward assurance and serenity could have sustained her love and faith in those years. William's letters grew even fewer; that was his exquisite sense of honour that would rather fall below than exceed the appointed limit. Even to her eager heart they sometimes seemed stilted and formal, thin fare to sustain a love through five years of absence and opposition. Adela's love sustained itself, she knew her own childish, meagre letters expressed little of what she felt, and so she distrusted writing as an expression of emotion. No doubt of William ever entered her mind. When she read "My dear Adela, I feel the time will never come when we shall be united," she sorrowed for his anguish, and felt the comforting assurance that she would more than make up to him for all he was suffering now.

Mr Gage could make no headway against such conviction. Adela's twenty-first birthday was still some distance off and the subject lapsed once more into a limbo of silence, to be resurrected now and again only in an occasional remark from Mrs Gage.

Time can be trusted to accomplish many miracles, and when the subject was again raised, this time as a practical project of the immediate future, Mr Gage's opposition had degenerated into the offering of every conceivable obstacle to his wife and daughter.

"Is it conceivable, Mrs Gage," he asked, "that my daughter should travel alone and unchaperoned on such a journey?"

"Of course not, dear," his wife agreed. "I know you would never permit that."

She had the solution ready, beautifully simple and appropriate. Esther Gage, a second-cousin, would accompany Adela, and the two ladies would be placed under the personal

protection of the captain of the *Robert MacPhee*, himself a close friend of Mr Gage. So it was arranged. Esther Gage was nearing thirty, unmarried and apparently unmanageable. It was felt by all that Australia would be a happy solution for her. On the 3rd of May, 1844, Adela and Esther set sail for the New World.

III

The new home faced the City Road near its junction with the Parramatta Road. It was a commodious gentleman's residence of brick, cemented over and painted red. It was almost a new house, having been built two years before for a Mr Clive Murther. This gentleman had followed his convict son to Sydney many years before, had arranged and paid for the boy's assignment to him as a servant, had taken up a small holding several miles out of Sydney, and had lived there alone with his son in the most obstinate obscurity. What neighbours there were declared that the father had done all the work of the place. He had nursed the boy through a long illness—a consumption contracted under the hardships of an English prison and of the voyage to Australia—spinning out his life with a thousand cares and expedients. When the boy had died the wretched man had behaved so wildly, declaring to strangers that he was a murderer and that no one but himself was to blame, that he had a narrow escape from being confined at Tarban Creek as a lunatic. For years he had devoted his energies and money to the amelioration of the convicts' lot and to helping those who had served their time to get work and to regain their respectability. He had refused to ally himself with any philanthropic society or Church and had fiercely repudiated any credit for his labours. With the passage of time he had become happier and gentler. He saw the amelioration of the prisoners' lot, the growth of a better public spirit; despite himself he gathered friends. He spoke to them sometimes of his martyred and beloved son, but much of his rancour was gone. He was persuaded to build this house on the City Road, where he surrounded

himself with a large household of his *protégés*, and he ended his life there in something approaching peace.

His ghost might well have haunted the place, but that the house was surely ghost-proof. It was of the unimaginative Victorian pattern, high and narrow, with steep stairs, narrow corridors, pinched offices, large reception-rooms, hierarchic bedrooms in which the pleasingness of the chamber was definitely moderated to suit the social status of its probable inhabitant; a cupboard under the stairs, a reticent front door with panes of red and purple glass, a balcony of wrought iron. Of unimpeachable gentility, it was screened from public gaze by a row of pepper-trees much older than the house. They were nearly as luxuriant and languid as willows; their lazy green made a perpetual curtain before the drawing-room window and produced in the room a melancholy green twilight.

The house stood in several acres of land and at the rear was a kitchen-garden with cucumber frames, a pit into which all the household refuse was thrown, a coach-house, stables, and menservants' quarters over which old Libby was brought from the store to preside. His usefulness at the store had been problematical for some time, so that it seemed an economy to bring him here to ruin the kitchen-garden with his untutored and almost vengeful attentions. Star and a carriage-horse called Dolly—relic of the late Mr Murther—inhabited the stables, a new bright yellow phaeton the coach-house. In this phaeton, with Dolly between the shafts, the quartermaster drove back and forth to the store. He was the sort of man who becomes an old identity almost at once, so that the residents of the Parramatta Road, the workmen at the brickfields, and the shopkeepers of George Street soon thought they had been seeing him drive past in his indescribably sailorly fashion all their lives.

At seven-thirty each morning the phaeton swerved round the corner into the Parramatta Road, rattled down the hill that is now Broadway, passing Saint Barnabas', and up to the farther crest where the Wheatsheaf stood. The Wheatsheaf was the country-people's inn, and the bar was always

filled with bare-legged men in fustian jackets, their short black dudeens between their teeth. When any of the countrymen happened to be hitching or unhitching their wagons outside as he passed they would greet him after the custom of the country. The road plunged down again to the Haymarket, a red brick building of many arches, built ten years before. There was no lack of refreshment on this road to the city; before he had reached the cemetery the quartermaster passed no less than six inns, all flourishing —the Dog and Duck, the Black Swan, the Talbot, the Steam-engine, the Oddfellow, and the London.

Dolly walked up the long steep slope of Brickfield Hill, the bugbear of Sydney horses, encouraged no doubt by the sight of many a straining brother between the shafts of a heavily laden brick- or tile-cart. Then she picked up her pace again on the level past the old cemetery, closed now for twenty years but destined to remain an eyesore in the very heart of the city for another thirty. Beyond it the cathedral church of St Andrew was slowly rising in a humbler form than that great temple Macquarie and Greenway had planned, but the quartermaster could see little of the building operations for Moore's bookstalls, which lined the footpath. Fanny often expressed a lively interest in these stalls, where many unusual literary treasures could be picked up, but William looked sourly on them, said they disseminated the writings of Tom Paine and like pernicious literature to the people, and was all for writing to the City Council about them. The quartermaster cared nothing either way; he drove on past the new Royal Hotel, that had risen phœnix-like from its ashes in 1840. Next door to it was the small foundry but lately established by a Peter Nichol Russell whose statue in bronze was destined in after-years to grace a university that owed him so much. The quartermaster stopped here sometimes on business, and afterward Dolly had to make up the lost time.

They bowled past the Blackboy at the corner of King Street, and the quartermaster might remember certain boisterous evenings he had spent there, unaccompanied by William, with some of his seafaring friends, listening to the

comic songs, joining in the choruses, and banging on the wooden tables with their tankards. At eight in the morning it was quiet enough, and the pot-boys were busy mopping up last night's spilt beer. Across the street was Golden Corner, where land had sold for £55 10*s*. a foot ten years before. The quartermaster could not forbear to shake his head over such inflated values. The six Doric columns of the post-office were soon in sight, with the barracks opposite and Lyon's famous auction rooms alongside.

The road veered to the north, and there was a whiff of the sea on the breeze. Most of the buildings in Lower George Street owed their origin to Macquarie and were surrounded by the twelve-foot walls in which he delighted—it was old Sydney even then and becoming almost a Chinese quarter. There was the store that had often been pointed out to the quartermaster as the first post-office and a perfect gold-mine to the enterprising shopkeeper to whom it had been farmed out, and there Mary Reibey's store once stood—a female whom Fanny had evidently wanted to emulate, but she'd got over all that nonsense like a sensible girl. In one of the narrow streets that ran darkly away between the twelve-foot walls the quartermaster may often have passed little William Dalley, the statesman of the future, playing marbles with his boon companion Gardiner, the bushranger to be, outside his father's slop-shop. But he was probably too busy to notice him, for in another moment he would round the Battery, where eight guns from the old *Sirius* defended the port; then he would be in Windmill Street and at the store.

Fanny and William were responsible for the furnishing of the new house. They brought some of their effects from the store, but these were neither numerous nor fine enough for the new rooms. The intricate golden clock graced the pink-and-white mantelpiece in the dining-room, looking down on its old friend the oval mahogany dining-table; but the wreathed and tortuous sideboard, the marble urns that flanked the clock, the very solid and prosperous chairs, and the handsome red carpet were new. Pictures of decorous subjects in heavy gilded frames, and a set of the

poets in calf, protected by glass, gave the place a cachet of gentility. An immense canopy bed that turned the quartermaster's mind and alas! his tongue to grandchildren was bought for the best bedroom, and the dismembered parts got up the narrow stairs with immense effort. A wardrobe of like proportions, a double washstand loaded with immense and very flowery crockery, and some pictures of extreme and touching innocence completed a bedroom to which William felt he might bring his bride without shame. Fanny elected to keep the walnut bureau, the oval cheval-glass, and the flounced dressing-table, which were, after all, more in her confidence than any human being. The little bed came too. Though William did not approve, he could not bring himself to argue with his sister about her bed.

Katie also accompanied the Hydes from the store, as her young man had proved too Scotch to marry her so far. She had not lost hope, but went on quietly from day to day, never noticing how they were adding up, till one morning after she had been awake all night with toothache she discovered that she was a middle-aged woman. Fanny found her stirring the porridge with tears running down her cheeks.

"Is it so bad?" Fanny inquired, in alarmed solicitude.

"No, Miss Fanny, it isn't the tooth, not now, but I guess I've missed the coach. I guess Jock'll not marry me now."

"How absurd, Katie! Of course you'll get married, and you'll make a splendid wife."

"No, it's too late. And I'll tell you, Miss Fanny, the worst of it is I don't want to marry him any more. Oh, Lor'! Oh, Lor', what have I come to?"

She sent Jock away in no uncertain tones the very next week. He was startled and aggrieved. He would sorely miss his Saturday night teas in Katie's kitchen and her unemotional and inexpensive companionship. He felt as if they had been married for years and that she was wantonly deserting him. Now, Katie was able to have her tooth pulled out although it was a front one; she could leave off

the curl-rags that had disturbed her nightly rest for years, and she could give up her efforts to achieve a waist. She was also freed from the restlessness and the tremors that even such a very steady young man had brought her.

"Lor', Miss Fanny, it's best as it is! I'm that comfortable and peaceful now, you'd never know. I can settle down and enjoy myself my own way."

Every year she got more and more comfortable and settled herself more deeply into the affairs of the house of Hyde. Having now no interests of her own, except perhaps food, she wrapped herself up in her employers' affairs and was a sort of backstairs grandmother to Maud's and William's children.

IV

When the move was accomplished and the new house settled into working order Fanny entered on a period of insufferable dullness. William practically exhorted her to behave like a lady, and a housemaid was engaged, one of Mrs Chisholm's assisted immigrants, called Elsie, so that she was relieved of the housework and had only the ordering and the accounts. She reflected that it was no use becoming interested in this house as Adela would arrive soon and take it from her. Of Maud she saw little. Balmain was a long way from the City Road, and Fanny always found too many Gillams there for her taste. Maud's first child, a girl, had been born at the beginning of the year, and was, Fanny felt, one more stranger come between them. The birth of the child had shocked and frightened Fanny far more than she would admit, and in consequence she almost disliked the little thing and only grudgingly agreed to be her godmother. She knew that, did she refuse, the honour would go to Miss Adelaide Gillam, who visibly hankered. The child was christened Frances Adelaide in St Phillip's Church, where Humphrey had once drawn hearts in his prayer-book and Maud had admired Miss Adelaide's bonnets.

Now they all waited for Adela. The old life at the store had slipped so far away from Fanny, and she was so wrapped

in her discontent that the story of Mr Giles's collapse and Benjamin Shirley's translation to the mill filled her with little interest.

Mr Giles had a heart attack at the mill. It was *angina pectoris* and his sufferings were acute. The attack passed, but it had been the last straw. His spirit was broken. Between pain remembered and pain feared he became almost in a day a querulous and confirmed invalid. No amount of bullying or exhortation could rally him. He feared the pain more than his wife, and she was powerless. After several weeks there was nothing for her to do but to tender his resignation, which she did in a brief but pithy interview with the quartermaster.

The quartermaster mopped his brow, drummed on his table, and thought. And he thought of Benjamin Shirley. He was quite the best manager for Farina Mill (poor Thomas had been a Latin scholar) that he could conjure out of the ground. He was a pale, weedy young man, and his hands were always damp, but even this defect could not conceal his absolute probity, his methodical book-keeping, and his unaspiring docility. He knew the quartermaster's ambitions and methods, and he already handled that part of the mill business which went through the store's books. Benjamin it should be. Mrs Giles would probably think him a nincompoop. It was like throwing the boy to a raging tiger. If he had any gumption he would protect himself in the only possible way. The only sort of fool that Mrs Giles didn't devour was the fool that seemed likely to marry her daughter. He might do worse: he would get a half-share in a flourishing mill, and a bride who, if not young and charming, would be submissive and grateful. The quartermaster didn't see why Benjamin shouldn't better himself.

Benjamin, after some heart-searching, accepted his elevation. He was invited to dinner at the new house. The quartermaster led him from room to room, pointing out the features of interest, and even took him into the garden and struck lucifers to show him the cucumber frames. He also dropped a seed of good advice:

"Now that you have bettered your position, Benjamin, you should think of getting married!"

Benjamin made an inarticulate noise; it was a blossom that sprang from his undying devotion to Maud.

"Now that your sister is married you must be lonely, and you will be still more lonely at the mill. A nice little heiress now, eh?"

Delighted by his *finesse*, the quartermaster suddenly abandoned it. He poked Benjamin in the ribs and said, "You couldn't do better than Miss Euphemia. The old man can't last, and that means a half-share in the mill."

Silence descended on Benjamin at the mill. His reports came to hand with the regularity of clockwork, his copper-plate hand knew no wavering, his meticulous accuracy no aberration. There was nothing to indicate what stress he was suffering, how his courtship progressed, or whether it progressed at all. The quartermaster had put the boy in the way of a good thing; he had to do the rest for himself. When you no longer saw Benjamin it was hard to remember that he was a human being, not a calculating-machine.

V

Benjamin and his inconspicuous affairs were swept from every one's mind by the imminent arrival of the *Robert MacPhee*. She was due, and the quartermaster had made special arrangements with the pilot station to let him know when the vessel was sighted. There were days of tension. Fanny made and remade her domestic arrangements. She assured herself that Adela would find nothing to criticize. While they waited the carefully worked up spontaneity of the welcome they had prepared for Adela fizzled out. Even the quartermaster showed signs of wear and tear. Late one night the messenger came from the pilot station. The *Robert MacPhee* was standing off the heads and would berth about nine o'clock the next morning. Behind the mask of his grave face William knew panic. Fanny felt relief, her energies were liberated—at last there was something definite to do.

No sooner had the *Robert MacPhee* cast anchor than William and the quartermaster were alongside in a waterman's boat. A few minutes more and William was looking into the wide hazel eyes of his Adela, and feeling amazement. Their meeting kept up the best traditions of the British Empire, and foreshadowed the still more famous meeting of Livingstone and Stanley, buried as yet a couple of decades in the future. A closed carriage was waiting, the phaeton being considered too casual for this great occasion, even had it been large enough. George from the store was left to collect the trunks from the hold, and in a very short time Adela and Esther were on their way to the City Road—a triumph of masterly organization. Adela was observed to be a little pale. She looked from William to the quartermaster and back again. In the carriage she held Esther's hand tightly.

On the evening of the day after her arrival a dinner-party was arranged to introduce Adela to the family. In the interval Fanny rested her and made her feel at home with efficient and competent kindliness. She thought Adela rather a colourless girl and hoped she was healthy, for Adela was pale and quiet, and had an odd, disconcerting way of looking from face to face as if she wanted something. Fanny was more anxious to cover up than to investigate this peculiarity. Adela saw little of William alone, and certainly her eyes found no answer in his face.

The dinner-party was a massive affair. Maud and Humphrey were coming, Mr and Mrs Gillam, Evelina and her young husband, Phœbe and her *fiancé*, and of course Miss Adelaide, who so far had lived up to Humphrey's prognostications. At the last minute Benjamin Shirley, who chanced to be in town on business, was included "for Adelaide." He was a little paler, a little damper, and immaculately neat in a sober suit. Meeting Maud was painful, like blood rushing back into a numbed limb. She saw fidelity in his every glance, and took a sort of melancholy pleasure in him. After dinner she cornered him.

"Tell me all about yourself," she coaxed. "I hear that you have been getting on wonderfully."

He told her a little, and she surmised a little more.

"Dear Benjamin," she said, "I think you ought to marry; you would be happier and more settled." And then in apparent irrelevancy, "Euphemia is not happy."

"Alas, Mrs Humphrey—I cannot love where it is to my advantage. I—I have only loved once."

"That is only the more reason why you should make a sensible marriage. Forgive me, dear Benjamin, for intruding thus upon you—but, indeed, I feel like your sister because we were such friends when we were young and foolish. Do you remember how you saved my life when I fell off Star? Did I ever thank you properly?"

"I assure you it was the greatest pleasure; don't mention it."

She took his hand. "You will come to see me next time you are in town, won't you? I adore talking about old times. Now I must go and get thoroughly acquainted with my new sister."

She left him exalted and bemused. The next day he posted back to the mill, and within an hour of his arrival he had proposed to Euphemia and been accepted. Maud had acted purely from good nature. She looked on the marriage state as a sovereign panacea. She found Benjamin rather pathetic, and wanted to see the poor faithful fellow get on in the world. Later in the evening she remarked to Fanny:

"Seeing poor Bengie here reminds me of the store. Do you remember the dinner-party we had with the Giles' and Captain Hildebrand—and you wore a pink organdie? I was just thinking of it, and how fine we thought ourselves then."

"Yes. I remember."

She did remember, it swept over her like nostalgia. She saw again the lighted parlour, knew that it alone survived of all that brilliant, restless evening, and that her life would never be more than the passage from one parlour to another. Maud, seeing her sister's face, bit her lip and regretted that she had mentioned Captain Hildebrand.

VI

William considered the dinner-party a success; every one seemed favourably impressed with Adela, and he thought that his relations and connexions must have impressed her well too. An entertainment of this nature humanized the thought of marriage. It was only *tête-à-tête* with Adela that he occasionally felt a certain inadequacy. She was to give him a really bad fright before they were married. The wedding was fixed for a fortnight after her arrival, as there was nothing to be gained by delay. She had unpacked her wedding-dress, a voluminous garment of funereal white satin which lay swathed in sheets upon an ottoman in her bedroom. It looked like a ghost, and gave her a fright every time she entered the room after dark. The ball-room at the Royal—where William and Maud had danced the night the *Rosamund* sailed two years ago—was bespoken, the rector of St Phillip's acquainted, the guests bidden.

There was a prosperous blandness in all this that chilled Adela. She had expected something simpler and kindlier. She had been prepared to be William's helpmeet, had thought so often of him as needing her. That, she told herself now, was vanity. Five years lay like bars of cold iron between them. He had changed, not she. The joy and spontaneity of love, that she had kept alive in her heart like some vestal fire for five years, snuffed out almost in the hour of reunion. Their marriage loomed before her, crushing and inevitable. She could not make a *confidante* of Esther; her pale, shallow eyes held no comprehension. She noticed nothing. What was there to confide? Fanny was kind and attentive, but Adela was not slow to catch the note of duty, and was well aware that any confidence to her would fall on rocky ground. The natural person to whom to speak, she told herself, was William. If any misunderstanding had grown up it was for her honestly and trustingly to go to him and set matters right before the wedding. Perhaps he was suffering just as she was. He had always been a little diffident, a little difficult.

So hedged about was she with proprieties, civilities, and

attentions that it was only upon her wedding eve that she was able to find the time, the place, and William, for a quiet conversation. Her mood by this time was touched with hysteria. The conversation did not run along the lines she had intended. She had meant to be gentle, lucid, and reasonable.

She came quietly behind him as he sat reading the news-sheet, and put her arms round his neck. He leapt politely to his feet and offered her a chair.

"I wanted to speak to you, William." That fell like a stone down a well. Her voice sounded self-conscious, instead of warm and friendly.

"Delighted, dear Adela," said William, neatly folding his paper and laying it aside. He waited, she gulped.

"Dearest, I—I—wanted to talk to you about ourselves. I have thought—it was very silly of me—that you—that things between us are not the same as they used to be."

"My dearest girl, what do you mean?"

"A—a—little coldness. William, do you still love me, do you want to marry me?"

William positively jumped. "Good heavens! Adela, whoever put such a notion into your head? Surely nothing I have done or omitted to do can have given you that impression?"

She knew that her effort was ruined, that she had frightened and antagonized him, and began helplessly to weep.

"Adela, I solemnly assure you that I have never paid attention to any other woman. I am grieved that you should doubt my affection or my intentions. I have striven to make a home worthy of you. I and my family have done all we could think of to make you welcome. Is not that proof enough? You talk of coldness. What can I say? Have you forgotten that your position is a delicate one, staying here before our marriage. We must be as circumspect as possible."

She was weeping as quietly and as unoffensively as she could. She could never explain to him now. He laid his hand gently and unforgivingly on her shoulder.

"Dear Adela, you must not disturb yourself like this.

Of course, you are strange here still, you have not yet recovered from your journey, and we have been thoughtless in taking you about so much. Come, my dearest, smile at me and say you will be happy."

She did smile with trembling lips, and he kissed her on the brow.

"I shall send Fanny to you. She will know what to do."

Fanny, told that Adela was indisposed, was all solicitude. Adela allowed herself to be restored and comforted, and meekly agreed that it would be as well for her to dine in bed and that she was overwrought. She was glad to be alone, this last night of her girlhood.

CHAPTER VII

THE GRANDSONS

In the early summer of 1845 William's son was born. He was born at a time when the family fortunes stood high, and his advent was the crowning triumph of a good year. He was a lusty baby from the first. When Katie laid the swaddled atom in William's arms he felt a depth of emotion that he had not known since the early days of his love for Adela. The emotion was sudden. He had automatically wanted a son, but he had not thought of a baby as a son. A son was something that developed out of a baby when it was about ten years old. Babies belonged to women, and were mysterious and delicate subjects of which gentlemen took only the most cursory cognizance. But this baby was a son from his first breath. The baby made William feel safe, he assured the future. William had his ancestors, sturdy men doing useful things, behind him, and his son before. He was securely knit into the pattern of life. He was no longer the youngest male in the family. Another had come to vouch for his maturity, to stabilize his position in the world, to cement him in. He was convinced that this baby was a peculiar dispensation, a Hyde baby. There was little of this in his well-schooled face. He solemnly kissed the child and laid him ceremoniously in the quartermaster's arms. The quartermaster was red in the face with pleasure and emotion. He received and blessed his grandson. The occasion was a solemn, almost formal one.

Though he soon recovered from the solemnity of the moment, for days the quartermaster thought of little but his grandson. Half the waterfront had drunk to the child before the week was out. The quartermaster went about

beaming, receiving congratulations and taking the credit. This parade of his private affairs was vexing to William. But William's cranks weighed no more with the quartermaster than of old, though his judgment did.

For months now he had been thinking of extending the wharves. There was room on his waterfront to throw out another wharf, and the business was now so increased that more accommodation for ships would be useful though not imperative. The quartermaster, who liked to have some new project always in preparation, had been revolving the scheme in his mind and conversation for months. William, in the light of the financial crisis of two years before, had thrown cold water on the idea. The quartermaster had grunted and grumbled and gone on thinking. The birth of the grandson resolved his doubts.

"We'll get to work on that new wharf now," he announced, as if all were settled.

William raised his eyebrows and looked cold. He thought the birth of a child, however important, an irrelevant reason for building a wharf. But the quartermaster, secure in this token of divine favour to his house, defied reason. He soon trumped up some reasons as a concession to the doubting William.

"The boom's coming and we must be ready for it. If we build now we'll build more cheaply. The contractors will beat one another down to get the job. This is only a beginning. We're prosperous now, but every one is so frightened, they won't take advantage of the prosperity. By the time the other fellows have decided the good times have come to stay we must be ready to snap up the trade—see, William?"

"Yes, Papa, that's all very true if your premises are correct, but there may be no boom. Why should there be? We are doing fairly well, but then we are fortunate. The community as a whole is not prosperous. It cannot be while the wool industry is depressed, and we will not be secure in our prosperity until it is universal. I beg you to be cautious."

"No boom, William! Good God, boy, I'd have christened

you Thomas if I'd known how you were going to turn out! No boom!"

Before James was a fortnight old the quartermaster had called for tenders for the new wharf.

The child made him think of the past as much as of the future. He measured the distance between his son's birth and his grandson's. William had been born in a London lodging-house to nothing in particular, William's son in a commodious and elegant house to an ever-increasing inheritance.

This event was like a hill from which he could look back. He did look back, always with the thought of the grandson in his mind. He did not regret the years in the Navy. A man learned what was what in the Navy; it seasoned him. A process like the slow rising of cream to the top of milk had taken place in him, so that at fifty he was able to bring to his work faculties concentrated, not depleted. He had done the work of fourteen years in seven. He had built a business and on that firm foundation he was building a family. At first there had been the store and wharves, he had sunk his whole capital in them. No one knew the business of victualling ships better than he, and, what was even more important, he knew sailors. The business had thriven from the very first. As his capital had begun to accumulate again he had spent it.

He had three rules, and to them he attributed his success. The first was never to *lend* money. The idea was offensive to him. When a master or an owner came to him in difficulties, if he thought the venture sound he offered not an advance, but a partnership. He preferred a partner to a debtor any day. A partnership carried a voice in control; it ensured custom to his store. It was better than straight-out ownership, because it secured the interested services of the partners, which were as valuable as gold. The *Rosamund* had been his first venture, old Giles's flour mill the second. They had turned out well. He had chosen his time for selling well, too. The whaling business had gone up and down, up and down, but it seemed as if it might be down for good now with the American whalers filling the

Pacific, and he had sold his share of the *Rosamund* at just the right moment. It had been a relief to get rid of that fellow Hildebrand, though he was the finest whaling captain in the Pacific, damn him! He had always picked his men well—the man he could not control for his courage and independence; the man he could control for his docility. Then other enterprises of a like nature had followed. Each had been a rung by which he had climbed a little higher. He enumerated his interests to the glory of James the second. Besides the store and the mill, he had interests in the Northern Rivers Packets, and through them did a speculative but profitable trade with the North. Any hold space left over on an outgoing ship he filled with likely commodities which the master sold along the rivers. This was a sort of lucky dip arrangement, but it usually turned out very advantageously. He had shares in several small boats which brought in a fairly steady profit. He now employed a couple of competent shipwrights and a marine painter so that he made a small profit on all repairs that came to his wharves. In seven years his business had developed into a complicated mechanism all the levers ready to his accustomed hand.

His second rule was never to touch anything but necessities. It secured him against any passing depression. But beyond that, he liked necessities, they were substantial and immortal. The quartermaster was no gambler, he built his business solidly.

His third rule was never to undertake anything that did not fit in with his other activities. He was determined to keep all the threads in his own hands. His business, though complex, was compact; its various parts fitted together like a jig-saw puzzle. Part fitted to part and made a whole. His partners became his customers and the customers of one another. His transport business filled his store and distributed the produce of the mill. The store trade swelled the business of his partners, all business swelled his profits. The thing bred in, and it bred money. He was the centre, the nucleus. He made profit, but he made it fairly, profiting those he traded with. Business,

the quartermaster thought, was only horse sense—that, and not getting above yourself and letting your advantage slip when you made a success. He would never do that, neither would William, though he had thought him rather weak on the point once. The boy should be brought up on horse sense. He'd be a fine merchant and a fine citizen.

From his hilltop the quartermaster looked back not only on his own activities, but on the growth of a nation. When he had arrived seven years ago, New South Wales had been a colony with a bad name, Sydney a small town, Melbourne in its infancy. A year later transportation had been abolished and by that act New South Wales had passed from a convict settlement to a colony. She would soon live down the convict element—a generation, and it would be gone; two, three generations, and it would be forgotten. This was the land of the second chance, he took off his hat to it. Free settlers would come out more and more now. Far-sighted people like Caroline Chisholm were organizing immigration schemes. England was beginning to recognize their needs. It was time, too; they shouted them loudly enough. For a couple of years now they had been enjoying representative government. Every man with a stake in the country could have his vote, and the first election had been fought with amazing noise and fury. One poor devil had got himself killed in the crush, and dozens of others had been injured. Of course no one was really satisfied yet. Already the ill-conditioned settlers in Melbourne were agitating for something else. Separation indeed! As if it weren't better for Englishmen at the ends of the earth to stick together. All this hadn't saved them from some bad times, though. The Bank of Australia had failed and things had looked very black for a time. But what was that against the steady substantial progress of the years before? It was folly that brought about these crises. If you stuck to business and had enough sense, you'd be all right. Hyde and Sons hadn't suffered. It was foolish to gauge the progress of New South Wales by that of Sydney. Everywhere settlers were pushing out into the country, taking it foot by foot. The wool industry was depressed, it was true, but it was

bound to come right again. That fellow Wentworth had hit on just the right idea for giving a fillip to the farming business in his Lien on Wool Bill. It was ridiculous to think that stock-growers with thousands of sheep on their runs hadn't been able to get credit for a chest of tea or a bag of sugar, when the wool growing on the sheep's backs was the finest security in the world. Wheat and wool and meat were necessities the world over, and Australia would some day produce these in untold quantities. The world could not do without her products, and so it was inevitable that she should prosper. His grandson would be safe here; he would have a big field. He'd go far, bless him! He'd never before seen such fine limbs on a new-born babe —which was not remarkable, as very few new-born babes had come the quartermaster's way.

II

Adela longed passionately for her mother. She was no match for the Hydes. She felt that they had pounced on her baby the moment he was born, and made him exclusively theirs. Even Katie behaved as if she were the child's mother, not Adela. She could see that William was deeply moved by his fatherhood, that the quartermaster was triumphant and expansive, that even Fanny congratulated herself on the birth of an heir to the house of Hyde, and it angered her that they should take such a personal view of the child, delighting in him not for himself, but because he fed their pride. They monopolized the baby; because he bore their name they thought he was theirs. They took advantage of Adela's being tired and weak; they went on with their robust and forceful lives over her head, and they snatched the baby right away into that life and shut the door upon her. It was too bad, Adela thought a little light-headedly, that a girl should be ill and out of action when her baby was born, for that was just when she most needed her strength to cope with her husband's relations. When she was lying quietly with the baby in the bend of her arm her anger and resentment seemed like a foolish dream. How could

anyone take such a tiny thing from her? He was utterly dependent on her and her alone—then she would be happy and content again. But the contentment did not last. When she saw their eager possessive eyes fixed on the child she knew her fancy was no dream. His physical dependence on her meant nothing at all beside his spiritual affinity with them—a soul that they had wished on him while he still had none of his own. Adela supposed that there always was that secret battle over the children, unless the parents really loved each other and were one as the prayer-book said.

Of course, every one had been very sweet to her—most solicitous and considerate. William had given her a diamond ring, had praised her, had kissed her reverently upon the forehead. The quartermaster had metaphorically clapped her on the back, and produced an amethyst brooch from his pocket with an air of insufferable benevolence. Fanny, backed up by William, had kindly relieved her of all domestic cares long before it was necessary, and had made her piles of the most exquisite baby clothes, almost usurping the mother's privilege of preparation. Never did baby have so fine a layette before, because Fanny and Adela had tried to outsew each other in hidden, bitter competition. Adela had obstinately bought pink ribbon, and Fanny had obstinately bought blue, and the baby had meanly put his mother in the wrong from the outset by being a boy.

It was inevitable that the baby should be called after the quartermaster. Adela admitted the propriety of this, but wished they had made more show of consulting her. It seemed very remarkable to her that she should be the mother of a person called James Crosby Hyde, but James every one persistently called him, so that she got used to it in time. Everybody on beholding James Crosby Hyde politely exclaimed, "How like his papa the darling is!" and as the months passed, as if through the force of suggestion, he certainly grew more and more like William. The thought actually occurred to Adela that perhaps he was more William's than hers, that she had not cared enough, or wanted him enough, before he was born. She knew now, too late, that a mother should fight for the soul of her child from the

very moment that she dreams of his existence. She had been apathetic and perplexed and sad.

Her year of married life had been a time of half-incredulous disappointment. She had come so suddenly and finally upon the end of her adventure that it had bewildered her. She had stepped out of reality into a picture and had been fixed there. She had ceased to be Adela Gage, and become William's wife, the quartermaster's daughter-in-law, Fanny's sister. She had left her world for theirs. It was an india-rubber world into which she had strayed. It yielded readily to her touch, but she made no lasting impression on it; as soon as she withdrew her pressure the impression she had made disappeared. There was Esther, of course, who should have been her ally, but poor Esther was a liability rather than an asset. She didn't 'get on' with Fanny, and Adela, having brought her into the house, felt responsible. Esther's behaviour was predictable in any given circumstances. Adela always had a painful fore-knowledge of just which of her tactless remarks she was going to make, and became acutely sensitive to her every imperfection. She was near-sighted, pink-nosed, and garrulously humble, forcing her victims a hundred times a day to assure her that she was welcome, that she need not leave the room, and that it was not greedy to have another cup of tea. People usually began by pitying Esther, then, since pity cannot go on for ever, they came to ignore her, till, when it became a mental and physical impossibility to hold her off any longer, they came to hate her in a shame-faced sort of way. Her obtuseness and unvarying sameness had a greater cumulative effect than any malignancy could have. Fanny, being of stronger material than most, passed over the first two stages and detested Esther at sight. Esther afforded Adela no shelter from the Hydes. The thought of Esther almost drove Adela back into the arms of her relations-in-law.

Every one was irreproachably kind to her and they gave her her just due as William's wife. William was a model husband, he honoured and cherished her, gave her presents and made allowances for her, and asked very little of her.

Slowly and with difficulty Adela came to believe that he loved her, though he was no longer in love. She was amazed and abashed when she thought of the certainty that had burned in her through the five years of their separation. Her vanity had been incredible. She had always been beloved; the youngest of her family by several years, she had been lifted out of the competition that holds the balance in a large family, and her brothers and sisters had joined with her parents in adoring the pretty baby and had delighted to yield to her. When she grew up and fell in love with William it never occurred to her that this relation would be any more transitory than the loves that had surrounded her childhood. She knew she was lovable, and constancy seemed natural. That anyone should stop loving her seemed highly improbable—no one ever had. But she was wiser now. She was amazed and rather frightened at the risk she had taken, and sometimes even felt thankful that it had turned out as well as it had. The disappointment had undermined her confidence. She would never be quite sure of herself again, would always be a little cautious, a little diffident.

She made good resolutions, lying in the big bed with the baby in her arms. She would settle down to be a matron, she would put away childish things, she would stop trying to prise open William's heart to find out whether he really loved her or not, she would school herself to want nothing that she could not have. Very likely there was no such thing as romance in real life, it was just something that young girls imagined. But her future presented thus to herself was more than she could bear. She began to cry softly and helplessly, and to want her mother.

As her emotion petered out, Adela surveyed her relations-in-law out of a dispassionate weakness. She was withdrawn from them a little now, and could look at them from the vantage-point of the big bed. The quartermaster was her friend; they liked one another. He called her Addie, and obstinately set his face against the atmosphere of conventional perfection that William was trying to create, out of not very promising material, for his home. Poor William!

The quartermaster found him a little irritating and very amusing, while William found him very irritating and not at all amusing. The quartermaster was generous, kind; he let fresh air into her life and she loved him, indeed she did, but he could never be her companion, far less her confidant. He thought her a handsome young female and he indulged her. His idea was that a female must be happy as long as she had plenty of fal-lals, parties, and compliments, and everything she might say or do that did not fit in with his views on handsome young females he treated as a wile.

But Fanny understood; the clarity with which Fanny understood every one was rather terrible at times. She understood but did not sympathize. Her grey eyes were intelligent and a little mocking. They would pierce Adela's depression and say to her, "Well, you would come, you know," while with every word that her lips spoke Fanny was pretending that Adela was the happiest and most fortunate person in the world. Fanny's eyes and lips were always contradicting one another. Adela had seen her, sitting at the end of a long quiet evening, suddenly idle, staring at her sewing with something wild and frightened in her eyes, and her mouth twisted in a sort of bitter comprehension. She treated herself as she treated others, she understood but did not sympathize. She was unapproachable; she never wanted people to do anything for her or to give her their confidence, and she would never give hers. Yet with all this, she was kind. No one could be kinder or more competent in illness than Fanny. She was never upset or distraught with pity, or frightened by suffering as Adela was, but always steady and reliable. She always knew just what to do. Adela wanted to love Fanny, and even more she wanted Fanny to love her, to take her in behind her wall of reserve. But she didn't suppose that it would ever come about. Fanny could defend herself against anybody's love quite as competently as she could manage the servants and tradesmen.

Maud was so different, you would hardly think they could be sisters. Maud was a darling. Was she just a little like the Duchess that Mr Browning had written about in one

of his queer poems?, who smiled at every one? She was so happy that she stirred Adela to a pang of wistful envy. That was odious, she reproached herself, but why was Maud so very happy? Had she and Humphrey some secret that Adela and William would never discover, no matter how hard they looked? Humphrey seemed agreeable enough, nothing more—good-tempered, amiable, devoted, but not romantic or splendid.

Adela knew all about Maud's marriage—twenty willing tongues had told her the story—how she had been married secretly one summer morning in her riding-habit at a little obscure place called Cobbitty, and had come back in fear and laughter to face her incensed mother-in-law; and how when they had stood before Mrs Gillam hand in hand like two children Maud had been stricken with an unbearable pity and remorse to think that their happiness could make anyone look so old and sad, and had impulsively flung herself into her terrible mother-in-law's arms, crying, "I could not help it, I love him so. I'm sorry, so sorry." They had come mysteriously together against Humphrey, who had so cruelly deceived his mother, and presently Mrs Gillam had dried both their cheeks and had warned Maud against various weaknesses in Humphrey's character, and all had been well, for the moment at least. Maud had explained complacently to Fanny that Mrs Gillam was quite all right if you knew how to manage her. Fanny had been, Adela gathered, not altogether sympathetic. Adela often thought that she detected a trace of irony in Fanny's attitude to Maud, but Maud completely ignored any coldness or reserve in her sister. Adela wondered if Maud were not perhaps the only person Fanny really loved, and Fanny bore her a grudge in consequence. Adela felt she could love Maud herself, but Maud's happiness was like a wall about her, making her invincible. That was what was the matter with all the Hydes, they were all invincible —the quartermaster in his common sense, William in his conventionality, Maud in her happiness, Fanny in her pride.

"Is there nothing I can give any of them?" thought Adela. She looked at the baby, but he was asleep and seemed

utterly remote in his unconsciousness and immaturity. "He will be invincible, too. He will want nothing that only I in all the world can give him." The ready tears came to her eyes again; she let them trickle from the corners of her eyes across her temples and lose themselves in the braids of hair that lay so smooth and meek on either side of her face. It was good to be alone.

III

Weeks passed and everything went on as usual. They had waited for the birth of the child, now there was nothing to wait for. Everybody seemed content with the days as they found them. Fanny walked in the garden with James in her arms, giving him the benefit of the morning sunshine. She went through an avenue of sunflowers, very tall and heavy, passed the herb-bed from which the sun was drawing out the perfume of mint, skirted the circular well with its stone coping and boarded top, and on to the cucumber-frames, where the quartermaster still obstinately grew cucumbers because he would not let a little thing like climate deflect him from his good English habits.

Fanny sheltered the baby's face from the sun with the edge of his shawl. She stood still and looked at the little blank sleeping face. A steamy scent of earth, manure, and sunflowers rose about her, the sun beat on her neck as she bent her head. She wondered why they should love and value this small, helpless scrap so much, should think him miraculous when the birth of a child was one of the most commonplace events in the world. It was vanity or some snare of nature to dupe you into caring for and protecting the little thing, a coating of sugar round a lot of trouble. She wondered whether she would feel differently if it were her baby, whether she would be caught too. She felt no emotion, only a sort of contemptuous surprise. The baby opened opaque slate-coloured eyes, and looked at her. His regard was stern, empty, and unwavering. She had blasphemed him. They looked at one another for a long time, and Fanny thought, "After all he is one of us."

IV

Adela thought, "If only I could get away for a little while alone with James!" The desire grew so strong that she broached it to William. To her surprise he was perfectly agreeable that she should go away for a change.

"It would be very pleasant when the weather is a little cooler and you are quite strong. Humphrey has a place at Camden, I'm sure you would be very welcome. Fanny would go with you, of course, and perhaps Katie to look after James. We could doubtless manage with Elsie and Cousin Esther to supervise."

"Couldn't I go alone, William? I don't want to be a trouble to anyone. I'd love to look after James entirely myself—indeed I would. And the Gillams keep a couple of servants always at Gillam Park, don't they?" She clasped his arm, and a little colour came into her cheeks. "Would you not take me there, dear William, and leave me there for a month—or a fortnight if you thought that too long?"

She knew that slightly worried expression so well, and her heart sank a little lower.

"I don't like the idea of your being alone, Adela!"

"Not alone, really; there would be the servants—Mrs Mullins."

"Without any responsible person. Suppose James should be ill. I am given to understand that infancy is a very precarious period. I am sure on reflection you would be glad to have Fanny with you."

"You mean you don't trust James to me. Surely a mother knows how to look after her child better than an unmarried girl."

"My dear Adela, pray don't excite yourself. I am sure it is not good for you in your weak condition. I am only thinking of your comfort. Besides, I think Fanny has earned a holiday. She is the last person in the world to look for gratitude—but I do not know what we should have done without her."

Adela bit her lip. "Yes, William, I know, I thought perhaps she'd like a—a holiday from responsibility."

Surely William would run out of excuses for her soon. At first when he had found her unreasonable he had attributed it to the strain of the journey, then to the strangeness of the new life, then of course there had been the baby, and now he kindly pretended she was still an invalid. She produced a small forced laugh.

"Is it not strange, I have been in New South Wales for more than a year, and yet I know very little about it? The climate is different, of course, and it is very hard to get used to Christmas in the summer. I have seen a few aborigines, and everything is very new and raw. Of course, there are a lot of differences, but we live much the same sort of lives as we did in England. I thought it would be so different."

"I have striven to reproduce our English life as far as possible," said William, with pride and complacency. "I think it is the duty of every Englishman to reproduce English conditions as far as possible wherever he may happen to be. The man who does not is, I don't scruple to say it, a renegade. If I thought the conditions of a new country had deflected me a hand's-breadth from the decent and decorous standards I was brought up to I should be grieved indeed."

Adela wanted to laugh but she saw it would not do. "But are we not a little ridiculous sitting here on the coast all dressed up, pretending we are in England, when only a few miles away life is so difficult and there is so much to be done? I have heard Papa and Fanny talk of the pioneers —and really it does seem mean of us to let them do all the work."

"We are not pioneers, my love, but we are just as necessary. Where would they be without us? And I certainly cannot see anything ridiculous in our mode of life. What finer thing can we do for Australia than make it like another England? Australia of itself is nothing. I have seen much of the surrounding country, and it is unprepossessing—large tracts of wooded country that does not deserve or receive the name of forest but is very properly called 'bush' —brown, drought-parched grass-land. A man must own hundreds of acres to make a living. Parts of the coast, I

admit, are pleasing, but untutored. It is a country that belonged to no one. The natives are a poor scattered people, they do not often give trouble on the mainland. The country is, if I may use a Latin expression, a *tabula rasa*—a blank sheet, dear Adela. It has no personality of its own, only a resistance. It is for us with British perseverance to break down that resistance, to plant English life here in its entirety. Who are we to edit the greatest civilization the world has known? It is our duty to behave here exactly as if we were in England. I shall never abate one jot or tittle of our good old English ways. Ours is a race of empire-builders because no Englishman worthy of the name ever yields to climate or environment. But there, my love, you need not trouble your pretty head with these deep questions."

Adela had sat through this oration with twitching lips and modestly downcast eyes. She saw an Empire built up on antimacassars and top-hats, Australia a brand snatched from the burning to the glory of gentility.

"Dear William, how wise you are!" she murmured, and came to stand beside him, slipping her arm through his. She loved him best when he was a little ridiculous. He looked down at her kindly. He had feared a little while ago that she was going to be unreasonable. He did not know why people should be unreasonable, when, if they took things quietly, life could be so smooth and pleasant. He wanted a sleek untroubled domestic life of almost mathematical calm, and did not see why he should not have it. He was a reasonable man, and never, he prided himself, asked more of his family than they could easily and happily perform. He looked at Adela in her meek and wifely pose, gentle and quiet, yet able to engage him in intellectual conversation; he looked about him at the substantial but ornamental furniture, the gilded clock, the marble urns; he thought of James upstairs in his bassinet—and he was content. It was as it should be. He had tamed matrimony, as the English were to tame Australia.

Adela's country holiday did not materialize. She realized that escape was an impossible dream, and the project slipped

out of her limp fingers and was forgotten. Life at the City Road went on in its decorous routine. James was christened in the parish church of St Barnabas with considerable pomp. His godparents were not entirely satisfactory. Adela obstinately insisted that Esther should represent her family, and Humphrey Gillam was asked from motives of policy rather than affection. There was, indeed, a brisk interchange of godparents between the two families about this time, and William undertook religious responsibility for Maud's second child, another girl, born a couple of months after James. James accepted a number of silver mugs, spoons, and corals with perfect equanimity, and settled down to sleep and grow fat until it was time to cut his teeth.

V

When Adela looked back afterward at the two years between the birth of her sons they scarcely seemed to exist, a mere crack in time. But in their lifetime the two years were slow in passing and full of a multiplicity of small tedious events.

There is a form of the eternal triangle that is not romantically sensational and come about when there are two women and one house. Adela was the *de jure*, Fanny the *de facto*, mistress of the house in City Road. Adela had the advantage of being the mother of James and the disadvantage of being the cousin of Esther. Fanny had the advantages of prior occupation and of the deep-grounded and habitual loyalty of Katie. She had also so impressed the family with her competence that it was taken for granted that the household could not get on without her. Each lady was hampered by her acute realization of the other's rights.

They concealed their heart-burnings under the decorous flow of their social and domestic life. Adela was never alone. When she went shopping either Fanny or Esther accompanied her. They spent the long quiet afternoons at home, sewing together behind the green lace of the pepper-trees, or paid solemn formal calls upon the Gillams, the Moores, the Franklins, the Vints, the Rudds, or the Newbolts. Occa-

sionally the quartermaster and William escorted them to the Royal Victoria Theatre, where, seated in a box, clad in flounced gowns and lace kerchiefs, they thrilled and pulsed to the warbling of Theodosia Yates, or clapped the admirable Mr Geoghegan in *The Hibernian Father*. On one never-to-be-forgotten occasion Esther, whom the theatre excited, threw her bouquet to the great Coppin, first of English theatrical stars to visit the Antipodes. He picked it up and pressed it to his lips, with a gallant bow—to Adela. Maud declared that Humphrey had taken her once to the weekly performance of burlesque. No one believed her, but they were all shocked nevertheless. On one occasion, when emerging from the theatre, one of the notorious Cabbage-tree mob knocked off the quartermaster's hat. It was only with the greatest difficulty that William prevented him from teaching the larrikin manners there and then. An occasional concert at the School of Arts was also deemed a suitable entertainment, and William indulgently escorted them. The quartermaster went once, and was bored to profanity. A great deal of nodding and bowing and whispering behind fans went on at these concerts, and the minimum of attention was paid to the artists.

When they fared forth thus to enjoy themselves the strictest decorum was observed within the family. Adela, as the wife, wore the most handsome gown, the greatest quantity of jewellery, and was handed in and out of the carriage first; Fanny, as sister and spinster, dressed more plainly; and Esther, as dependent, dressed very plainly indeed and contented herself with a simple locket containing a wreath of her sainted mamma's hair. She sat with her back to the horses.

Adela greatly preferred these excursions to the dinner-parties which it was her duty to give to the Gillams, the Moores, the Franklins, the Vints, the Rudds, and the Newbolts, and to the exactly similar functions to which they were bidden in return. She shared William's secret fear that she was frivolous. If it were a grand dinner-party they hired two waiters and had trouble with Katie in the kitchen, and if it were just an ordinary one they managed. But one

was as boring as the other, except when they made Adela homesick by reminding her of her papa. Maud's parties were much more sprightly, but there would not be many more of them. Maud announced her news one day.

"Humphrey," she said, "does not care for his papa's business. He wants to grow sheep and wheat and things, so we are going to live at Camden."

"You will never be able to tear yourself away from town and all the gaieties," said Fanny.

"Oh, yes," said Maud; "I like the country, and it will be so good for the babies."

Adela thought that her complacency irritated Fanny. That Maud should develop all the virtues in addition to her worldly good fortune seemed rather excessive, and angered Fanny a little, under her skin.

"Maud won't do it when the time comes," she said. But the house at Balmain was let to desirable tenants, and Humphrey's family removed itself to the country with all the confusion and excitement natural to such an event. In the years that followed Humphrey grew wheat and wool to the contentment of his heart and the depletion of his father's fortune, and Maud presented him with a baby about once in eighteen months.

Maud's departure for the country, whence she emerged only two or three times a year, to christen a baby or buy a stock of bonnets and gowns most unsuited to country life, left an aching blank in the social life of the household at City Road. Fanny felt it most deeply and said least. Looking back, she thought that Maud had been slowly breaking all their sisterly ties ever since the day she first entered on the life of deceit which culminated in her marriage. Now the final severance had been made. Maud had gone away gaily and lightly, leaving Fanny with the memory of their inseparable childhood and girlhood lying, like a broken and discarded toy, at her feet. Even Maud's final tender farewells were interrupted by prognostications that she had forgotten this or that, or by raids upon Francis, who was breathing on the carriage windows and drawing

pictures in the resulting mist. Maud was leaving her in levity, she needed her no more.

Adela, who observed Fanny closely, perceived something of this and tried to be kind and gentle to her. This increased the tension at City Road, for Fanny disliked being observed and suspected pity. She was evasively cheerful and harshly matter-of-fact, and, without an impolite word or unsisterly act, managed to repel Adela and to make it quite plain to her that she wanted neither help nor sympathy. Adela winced, and drew back.

VI

Esther blindly and well-meaningly piled fuel on the smouldering fire, and James complacently allowed his nice fat little body to become a bone of contention. But, with Victorian humility, they all tacitly agreed to hide their little unpleasantnesses from William and the quartermaster. With minute and resourceful tactlessness Esther built up a situation that became unbearable. The crisis came on Adela's birthday. The store and wharves were very busy. The quartermaster had slept there two nights and would sleep one more. William returned late at night and left early. Weariness made him stiff and exacting and he was very tired. Deprived of masculine company, the ladies felt first a slight sense of holiday, and then a profound flatness. The domestic orbit in which they lived and moved and had their being seemed futile and motiveless. The strain of the rush at the store drifted to them without its attendant excitement. In the circumstances, Adela's birthday could not be celebrated on the proper day. She accepted this cheerfully as a matter of course, but William wounded and annoyed her by his obvious effort to placate her supposed resentment with laborious explanations. When she protested that she expected nothing and quite understood, her annoyance put an edge on her voice which William mistook for pique that she should be set aside for the business. He explained again more minutely. He was hurt that she should be unreasonable when he was so tired, and she was hurt that

he should so misjudge her. They retired to bed in an inimical silence, and when Adela wanted to make it up William was asleep. Adela thought of other birthdays and felt homesick.

She woke up to a sense of anti-climax. Despite her repudiation of the night before, she missed her birthday very much. It had always been such a gay and important occasion. There had been so many brothers and sisters, aunts and cousins and friends to rejoice over it. Now she had only an overcast thundery day, and a sulky husband. She was disappointed and chilled despite herself, but would have died rather than confess it. She rose early, with tired limbs and heavy eyes, to superintend William's early breakfast as a good wife should.

Adela had barely reached the foot of the stairs when a terrible tumult broke out above her head, and presently above the tumult rose James's voice in a wail of fear and surprise. Fanny and Adela arrived in the nursery simultaneously, but the noise came from Esther's room next door. Both tried to take the baby, and Adela got him. The noise resolved itself into a cockatoo and Esther.

"Oh!" gasped Esther, "it's my surprise! You naughty, naughty bird, will you be quiet? For your birthday, dear Adela. He'll be all right in a minute. The man said he was very well behaved. I got a he because he's are always so much more modest in animals, don't you think so? Hush, Cockie, hush! Do you like him, Adela? I thought it would be such a surprise."

"It is a surprise," said Adela weakly. "However did you——?"

"I was very cunning. I hid the cage in the garden. There, I'll put this old shawl over him; now he'll be quiet. Yes, I hid the cage in the garden, and brought him up here after dark. I put my black satin petticoat over the cage and he was as good as gold—weren't you, Cockie? Then when I took it off the cage to dress he made that noise. You naughty boy!" Esther looked archly at the cockatoo and shook her finger at him. He made a gobbling noise from under the shawl.

The cockatoo was very white; he had an ancient, knowing face and gnarled, acquisitive claws. He was intelligent and humorous, but rather overpowering. Adela sagged a little under the honour. Fanny compressed her lips and her expression said quite clearly, "This is not my affair, you can fill your own house with cockatoos if you like, but I do think you might consider William and James." Her face said all that quite clearly, and Adela read it there.

Esther thought the cockatoo was a success. She was determined to be festive because it was Adela's birthday. When Fanny had awakened that morning she had thought, "It is Adela's birthday, she may feel homesick. I musk make a little difference." But her good resolutions withered away, and before the morning was over she detested Adela's birthday. Fanny was wary, but to-day she was too late to forestall Esther in doing the flowers. Esther liked to be helpful and spent a happy hour littering the pantry with leaves, stems, and patches of damp. Everywhere she went she scattered petals and drops of water. She left circles of water on the polished mahogany dining-table. Fanny raised her voice that all might hear.

"Elsie, come and wipe the dining-table and then polish it. It is wet."

"Dear me," cried Esther, "did I do that? I'm so, so sorry. Don't trouble, Fanny. I'll wipe it up in a minute. What a clumsy little goose I am. Adela won't let me do the flowers any more if I am not a good girl. What's the matter, Fanny?" But Fanny had gone.

In the kitchen Katie and Elsie disagreed. Katie called in Fanny, and Fanny, allowing justice to override policy, gave the verdict to Elsie. As a direct result, the croquettes for lunch were uneatable. Elsie bore the scarcely touched dish back to the kitchen in triumph, and her expression foreshadowed a ruined dinner as well.

Outside the sky grew darker and darker, and the clouds gathered low and threatening over the city. Adela recognized half-humorously that her birthday was heading for disaster. James felt the thunder in the air and missed his daily outing. After lunch Adela sat at the nursery windows

with the baby on her lap, watching the monstrous clouds gather and marshal themselves as if for a terrific storm. When she looked at the sky she felt that anything might happen, that all the powers of the heavens were marshalled against the earth. There was no wind. A curious vengeful steely light clothed everything. James wriggled and kicked on her lap, clutching at the laces of her dress and reaching up for her ringlets. This was generally his happiest hour, but to-day the only pleasure he had was when a piece of lace gave way under his fingers with a pleasant ripping sound.

From the quiet house below came the sound of a door banged. It was a crisp vicious sound like the snapping of the house's over-wrought nerves. Adela started and James uttered a dismal wail. It was dreadful, Adela felt, that they should all be so vexed with one another under that gigantic overhanging storm. Anything might happen on such a day. Fanny passed the open nursery door swiftly with never a glance for James, and shut her door with a finality that echoed the bang of a moment ago.

"So they have actually quarrelled," thought Adela.

When she descended the stairs it was like walking down into a tank. The house seemed unfamiliar in the dark stormy light; the red and purple glass of the front door made livid bruises on the linoleum; the green chenille curtain was like a veil of sea-weed. She opened the drawing-room door in trepidation. Would she find Esther drowned with her head in the goldfish bowl, or hanged from the chandelier by her stay-lace? It was impossible to conceive an heroic end for poor Esther, yet end she must surely have met who called upon herself the competent wrath of Fanny. The drawing-room was empty; the marble mantel gleamed cold and damp, but there was no other corpse. Adela thought it wise to accept her good fortune and look no further. She took her bead-work into the bow window, and, with her forehead almost touching the glass to get what light there was, tried to divert her mind with the intricate pattern. She felt uneasy. Ever and anon she raised her head and looked at the clouds, and each time they were more menacing. Every sense was waiting for the rain,

She wished some one would come in—even a quarrel would be better than this. The gas was never lit before five o'clock, so Adela did not light it now. She sat on in the window through an eternity, an illusion of cold creeping up her legs.

When the storm broke suddenly it came as a shock. The rain on the windows blotted out even the pepper-trees. Adela stood watching it; the floods of rain seemed to be washing away the strain of the dreadful day. It was an infinite relief to have the weather doing something at last. She began to wonder why the storm had not brought Esther in for company, to feel a little anxious. She went from room to room. Esther was not in the house; neither of the servants had seen her go out. Adela was becoming really alarmed. On her way upstairs to rouse Fanny she looked out from the tiny window of the landing upon the deluged garden and saw a figure moving beyond the battered sunflowers, in Fanny's kitchen-garden. Her heart stood still. Poor Esther must have become demented, nothing else could account for her staying out in such a storm. Wrapping a cloak about herself, Adela ran down the garden-path, which was flowing like a river. Without a word she caught Esther by the wrist and together they raced toward the house. She had to drag the almost fainting Esther over the threshold.

"For the land's sake!" cried Katie, and pounded upstairs for a change of clothing.

"Whatever were you doing? Are you gone mad?" asked Adela, as she slipped off her cousin's sodden clothes before the kitchen fire.

"Oh, dear! Oh, law!" sobbed Esther. "It's Fanny. I'll catch my death. I wouldn't face her till I put it right. There now, look at that, my red petticoat's running. Troubles never come singly."

"What were you doing?"

"I was planting the peas, dear."

"But—what peas?"

"Poor Cockie ate them, Adela. I let him out for just a minute—really it wasn't more than half an hour—and the next thing I knew was he'd gone along a whole row of

Fanny's little pea-plants and bitten their heads off. I am vexed about my petticoat! You'd never expect a bird to be so intelligent, would you?"

Adela began to see light. This fitted in nicely with the banged door.

"Fanny found out?"

"She did, indeed. She caught poor Cockie at it, and she blamed me. As if I'd even dreamed of him doing such a thing!"

"You did let him out—and Fanny sets such store by her garden."

"Well, I said I was sorry. I said, 'I'm so sorry. I'll put naughty Cockie back in his cage at once.' She said being sorry wouldn't put the plants back again. She said she couldn't stop me making a nuisance of myself in the house because it was yours, but the kitchen-garden was hers—though I don't see how she makes that out, for I suppose it all belongs to Mr Hyde."

Adela stopped aghast in her efforts to dry Esther's hair.

"So that put me on my mettle," went on Esther, who was certainly on it now. "I may be a dependent, I acknowledge it every day, but Fanny's another and I'll not be put in the wrong by her. 'Very well,' I said, 'you won't suffer for this *accident*.' And off she flounced. Then I went to the Chinaman's gardens."

"Esther! It's a mile away."

"Yes, I know, but I went and bought thirty little pea-plants. They didn't want to sell, but I got them, and then I planted them—and it came on to rain—oh, dear! it was dreadful." Esther began, appropriately, at this point of her narrative, to cry. But when a fire had been lit specially to warm her chilled limbs and Adela had plied her with hot negus she began to feel rather a heroine.

"The rain will have washed all the little plants out again, but Fanny can't blame me for that. If she'd only waited she'd have seen the storm would have spoiled her garden, anyway—it ought to be a lesson to her not to be so hasty."

When Fanny re-entered upon social life about five o'clock, Esther greeted her with a forgiving smile.

"It's all right, Fanny. I have replaced your plants, though I fear the rain has spoilt them now. I went to Chiny's gardens for them, and planted them in the storm."

Fanny's face froze.

"That is just the sort of mean thing you would do, to put me in the wrong," she said.

It was not a happy evening. Fanny read, Adela sewed upon a dress for James, and Esther sat at the table, writing and tearing up what she had written, and dabbing her eyes. After about an hour she came to where Adela sat and mutely held out a sheet of paper. Adela read:

> A refined gentlewoman is open for engagement for the instruction of young ladies in the arts of fashionable handwriting, bead-work, and ecclesiastical embroidery, either in a gentleman's household or at a select seminary. Apply Minerva, *Sydney Morning Herald.*

"But, dear Esther——"

"I am determined," said Esther in a choking voice, being as heroic as anyone can be with a red nose. "Do not try to dissuade me, dear Adela. I am sure our dear rector would testify to my character."

Adela was touched. "You must do as you like, dear Esther, but do not think for a moment that we want to lose you."

"I know you don't, my love, and it troubles me to think how you will get on without me. But my decision is unalterable." And Esther retired to bed with tearful dignity.

Adela was waiting up for William. Fanny had retired to her room, but her candle still burned; it often burned late into the night, but no one knew what vigil she kept. Esther had gone to bed in the odour of eucalyptus, and passing her door Adela had heard her crying. She had gone in and comforted her, brushing back the damp disordered hair and smoothing the rumpled bed in the twilight of one shielded candle. She had looked at James and he was asleep. The nightlight burned, a tiny yellow flame in a bubble of opal glass, like a taper before some altar.

It still rained heavily but the storm had passed. The air was thin and cool, the night of a clean blackness, and the smell of the wet grateful garden came in through the windows. After many vicissitudes Adela had a sense of well-being. The day had been a great swollen bladder of trouble, then something had pricked it and it was gone. She had seen the day's animosities as pitiful and comic. Fanny had lost some of her supremacy. Adela was glad that she was inside, out of the rain of spinsterhood. She was safe in William and James. She thought that it was envy of herself that had made Fanny and Esther quarrel, and was ashamed and humiliated by the thought.

William, returning wet and tired, looked young and thin. When he had changed his wet clothes and donned a dressing-gown she served him his supper.

"What did you do to-day, my love?" he asked.

"I am glad that James is a boy," she made surprising answer.

"But naturally."

They smiled at one another, kindly but without understanding. William thought Adela beautiful. It was as if he were at the bottom of a well and she leaning down to him from the top. To-night she was gay and tender. William was persistently haunted by a memory vague and light, and the scent of a musk carnation smelt across years, but he was too tired to pursue the memory. He was content with the well-being of his home.

VII

William's second son, Lionel, was born in the late spring of 1847, to a world externally the same as that which had greeted his brother but very different in spirit. There was little rejoicing at his birth. Adela was so ill and the baby so puny that William thought he would lose them both. With Adela ill and Fanny in attendance upon her, the routine of the home went to pieces in a few hours, and the acute discomfort of burnt chops, dying flowers, and displaced articles was added to William's anxiety. The child himself

was a disappointment, being tiny, ugly, and distressed. He was not the heir, and neither William nor the quartermaster thought of him save in connexion with Adela.

Eighteen forty-seven was not a fortunate year in which to be born. The brief flare of prosperity that had followed the colony's recovery from the 1842 crisis had petered out. There had been no other actual crisis, but a deep lethargy had settled upon the whole colony. It was a mental as well as an industrial depression. Population was decreasing, money was tight, enterprise languished. Progress was at a standstill. To outward appearance life went on as before, but rather because every one omitted to overthrow it than because it had any vitality. People continued their mode of living because they had not sufficient energy to retrench and rebuild the social and industrial fabric. The crisis of 1842 had affected the unwary and caused some acute distress, but this general moult affected every one; it was in the air. The quartermaster no longer talked of the great boom. A crisis he could have coped with, but the long-drawn-out depression sapped his vitality. The store was not in difficulties, nor likely to be; a fair volume of traffic kept up, and every one agreed that Hyde and Son would be among the last to suffer, but there was no progress. The wharf that he had begun so zestfully, the year James was born, was still unfinished. The contractor had gone insolvent when it was half finished, and it had seemed unwise even to the quartermaster to renew the project. The piles were a constant reminder of failure. William had seen his father stop and shake his fist at them, crossing the courtyard.

The quiet times aged the quartermaster. He tried to find a new interest in the political turmoil of the day. There was plenty of excitement there. The transportation system had been revived in a new form, but one no less obnoxious to the inhabitants of New South Wales. Agitation meetings were rife, and the quartermaster had dutifully raised his voice with the loudest of them in the protests that poured back to England by every ship. Early in 1848 the whole community rose in arms against Lord Grey's proposal to introduce a new constitution for New South Wales, by

which a system of double election would take from the free electors their right to vote directly for their legislators. The quartermaster was vehement in all his beliefs, and joined whole-heartedly in the universal condemnation which this proposal excited in every class. He and William forced their way into the huge crowd that thronged the Royal Victoria Theatre to denounce the iniquitous suggestion by public vote. But when it had been spurned, denounced, loathed, and despised in every conceivable term of obloquy, there seemed little left to say or do. Politics could never absorb him as business did, although he admired immensely the men who succeeded in it. It could supply no permanent interest. Fanny, looking up from her sewing in the evening, would often see her father sitting with his great fists doubled up on his knees, his face red, staring into space. She saw helplessness in his whole pose, and for the first time found him rather pathetic. "He's feeling it now," she would think. "Poor Papa, to have so much energy and so little to do with it. He should thank heaven he was not born a woman." But she never betrayed by word or look that she saw any difference in him.

Lionel did nothing to resolve this situation. Adela need not have feared that they would take him from her too. But she had feared. She had prayed a thousand times, passionately, with clenched fists, that this child might be a girl and hers, all hers. For months her mind had centred upon possession of her child. She had prayed to a God of Bargains who is older than the Christian God, and to whom we all have recourse sooner or later. "Only give me this baby for my own and they can have James. I won't lift a finger to take James back, but this one must be mine."

Lionel was hers, and the pact stood. He was not the heir. He was so small and delicate that any family would hesitate before they claimed entire responsibility for him, and a son born in those darkened years was a liability rather than an asset.

Adela's convalescence was slow. It was nearly two months before she could take her place again at the head of the household. She had been content to drift along from

day to day taking invalid's holiday and engrossing herself in Lionel. In the first few weeks of his life he was never out of her sight. She stiffened with anxiety every time he whimpered. His thin wail pierced to every corner of the house; it was a threadlike sound, futile and hopeless, but it found its way to every one's nerve centres. They knew the burden of a child in the house. Lionel and Adela together made William uncomfortable. He wanted them to look like the charming pictures of motherhood, in pastel colours, that were presented with the annuals, but they did not. Lionel puled instead of gurgling; and, instead of smiling complacently, he saw Adela's eyes darkened with passion when they rested on the baby, and her white face sharp with eagerness.

But despite her fears Adela was happy—her very anxiety was sort of luxury. There was hardly a moment of the day when she did not feel the baby drawing at her for his life. The very way his fingers closed round hers was different from any contact she had had with James. The touch of the elder child had been to her as insensient as the twining of a grape-vine. Lionel's feeble hands entreated her. She felt that she really was a mother now.

VIII

When Adela came downstairs she noticed a number of small changes. Fanny was more firmly established in authority than ever, and James had formed the habit of going to her for everything. He was resigned to being hushed and bundled out of his mamma's room, and apparently bore his supplanter no ill-will. Adela heard Elsie talking to him in the garden one day, and her conscience smote her.

"La, Master James!" cried Elsie. "What a dirty face! What will your mamma say?"

James thought a moment. "She'll say, 'Hush, don't wake baby!' "

But there, James was quite happy, thought Adela; he did not even seem to resent her absorption in Lionel. He loved his Aunt Fanny better than his mother. James's very amiability was a black mark against him.

The house downstairs had turned to Fanny much as James had done. They felt like another woman's rooms; Adela noted every little, perhaps unconscious, change in them. She looked out on the garden; it had changed from spring to summer while she was upstairs and the garden languished in the still heat. Only the sturdiest flowers could withstand the summer sun. Adela trailed out into the kitchen, where Katie was beating up a cake.

"Baking to-day, Katie?" she asked in mild surprise.

"It's Thursday, ma'am."

Adela looked innocent.

"We always has fresh cake on Thursdays on account of Mr Moore's coming to visit Miss Fanny"—Katie looked knowingly into her basin as if she saw hearts floating there—"for supper, and sherry wine."

"Of course," said Adela, and withdrew.

William had mentioned from time to time that Walter Moore had been there, but she had never connected his visits with Fanny. She had not thought of Romance and Fanny, but why not? She could find no trace of any new softness in Fanny's face, and Fanny had never mentioned Mr Moore to Adela. Perhaps that was a good sign. He had visited the house from time to time ever since her marriage—a handsome, florid man about forty, with a precise and weighty manner and the glossiest whiskers in Sydney. It was said that many years ago he had married a beautiful consumptive girl and had brought her to Australia in the hope of saving her life. The disease had gone too far, and she had died in little more than a year. The young husband, distracted by grief, had tried to shoot himself. His coachman, arriving just in time, had struck up his arm so that the bullet had passed through his shoulder instead of his heart. It was difficult to connect Mr Moore with any great emotion. He was a very good match, and there was hardly a matron in Sydney who had not coveted him for her daughter. After his wife's death his brother and his brother's family had joined him, and they had established the largest foundry in the colony and had thriven exceedingly. Now he was paying his court to Fanny, and Fanny, queer girl,

had said not a word about it. Adela remembered now various nods and becks and wreathed smiles from Esther, and deduced that they had referred to Mr Moore. Adela hummed at her sewing and thought that the future looked very rosy.

From her room that evening Adela heard the mild commotion of Mr Moore's arrival precisely at half-past eight. She heard his rich, satisfied laugh in the hall, the quartermaster's voice raised in welcome, and then the cosy shutting of the parlour door. Adela registered a vow that next Thursday she would stay downstairs to see for herself.

Fanny was fully aware of Mr Moore's intentions. With a humorous comprehension she watched him take the long way round of a super-decorous courtship. When the winding path should bring him to a declaration she supposed she would accept him. It was the intelligent thing to do. It satisfied her pride to feel that she was choosing him as coolly and as passionlessly as he was choosing her. She supposed that he admired her, that he considered her a suitable wife, being a sensible, competent woman, with good connexions, a neat dowry, and expectations later on. There was no question of love. He paid her her full meed as a gentlewoman, he courted her slowly and carefully. The unswerving regularity of his visits, the modulations of his tones, the elaboration of his compliments, were almost as good as banns. He would deprive her of nothing, because he did not love her, and because the extremely honourable position to which he called her demanded the full ceremonial. Fanny would certainly marry him, but she kept the whole family in suspense. To Esther's and Katie's innuendoes she turned a stony face. No one else, not even the quartermaster, dared twit her about her suitor. Esther insisted on believing in Fanny's romance. It kept her in a nice warm bath of sentiment. She admired Mr Moore immensely. If only Fanny would give her her confidence, what ready sympathy she would find! Esther would forgive all for the sake of romance. There was less for her to forgive Fanny now, because Esther went three days a week to teach the daughters of the clergy to embroider

altarcloths and to write an elegant hand in a seminary at Glebe. It relieved the tension at the Laburnums.

Fanny thought that Mr Moore made definite progress on the night of Adela's enlightenment, when he told her about his first wife. Fifteen years of attention to business had overgrown that one year of agonized tenderness—happiness and passion could have had little part in it—and the eighteen-year-old girl who had fought so desperately for her life was now conventionalized into the dear departed. He exhibited her to Fanny for a moment, then cleared her comfortably and finally away out of their lives. Of the pistol-shot he said nothing; it would hardly be a fitting anecdote for his *fiancée*-elect. Looking at him, Fanny felt sure that the story was not true. She did not want to believe it, it filled her with distaste. But after all she was not to be spared.

On a warm evening in March the ladies entertained Mr Moore in the drawing-room. The quartermaster and William were absent. Adela and Esther served, Fanny sat at the harpsichord, and Mr Moore stood beside her. It was a moment of perfect domestic peace and Fanny felt reconciled to her marriage—felt, indeed, almost as if she were already married, that the placid waters of life had closed over her plunge, and the last bubble of the tiny disturbance had burst, leaving her in an emotionless tranquillity. The harpsichord was near the windows, and three candles burned in either sconce. The light was kind to Fanny.

"What a beautiful evening after a tiring day! Delightful to sit by the windows," Mr Moore murmured to her as if in confidence.

"Yes," she murmured back, "but we shall soon have to shut them; a breeze is rising."

The long lace curtains moved in the breeze, the candles curtsied. Another moment, and the breeze grew strong. A curtain fluttered out and swept the candle-flame—a blaze sprang up to the ceiling. In an instant Mr Moore had torn down the burning curtain and flung it from the window, whence it fell to ashes on the grass. Fanny stamped out the flecks of fire upon the carpet, and, except for the echo of Esther's scream, it was all over. But the burning fabric

had fallen across Mr Moore's arm—coat and arm were slightly burned, his hands more severely. Fanny ministered to him with the oil and old linen Adela brought before she ran upstairs to see if the disturbance had wakened the children. It was necessary to cut the shirt away from the injured arm. Fanny's scissors moved steadily round the armhole and slit down the sleeve, revealing a surprisingly white soft arm and shoulder. Across the shoulder was an ancient cicatrice. Fanny's eyes fastened on it, and she grew very pale. Moore saw the pallor, and was pleased that his hurt should so touch her. He admired her mingled competence and sensibility. Despite the pain in his arm he spent a happy evening with three admiring and grateful women—or rather two, for Fanny was very quiet, a circumstance which he put down to shock.

The finding of the sear changed everything for Fanny. It made Mr Moore a human being, it dragged her into painful contact with the world of passion and romance, a world that she had put away six years ago. It was possible to contemplate marriage with a man she did not love and did not greatly admire only while she kept the idea in the dry atmosphere of reason and viewed it as a contract by which they would both gain something. Now the thought of the dead wife haunted her. It could not be jealousy, but she could not take without love the husband of this long-dead girl. It was like sin to live with him when she could not offer him a new love to cancel the old. He belonged still in the sight of heaven to Madeline. Fanny knew that her marriage would not be the kind that is made in heaven. Heaven would know nothing of it unless as a sin she had committed. She chid herself for sentimentality and folly, assured herself that nothing was changed, that Mr Moore and not she had broken the old bond, and broken it years before he had met her. It was useless; she rebelled against the marriage She feared that the old treacherous warmth might be flowing back into her heart. Perhaps she was coming to life again. Then she recognized another fear. This marriage, happy or unhappy, would almost certainly wake her again, make her once more vulnerable.

Fanny was afraid. She was like an insect new-hatched from its chrysalis, naked and unprotected in a dawn she could not face. At any cost she must get back. Fear beat about her like a thing with wings.

Despite her anxiety to be free of it, Fanny felt herself already involved in the marriage. She had tacitly agreed to the courtship; she had raised Adela's hopes; and she had no real reason for withdrawing now. Everybody was expecting the betrothal, and were she to send Mr Moore away now she would have to pass again through an ordeal of inquisition, though perhaps a silent one this time. Every one would be reminded of her inexplicable conduct six years ago. No one in the house would have recognized this vacillating, tormented girl. Fanny felt very lonely and weak. But, after all, farce, not tragedy, was to destroy the marriage, and it was Fanny's pride and not her heart that made the last decision.

IX

One evening the quartermaster brought home a stranger. He was a sad-looking man, climbing dolefully toward fifty. He had long, pale, melancholy features, and pale, lifeless whiskers. Heavy lines ran from his nostrils to the corners of his mouth, and the mouth itself was continued downward by means of creases for an inch or so on either side after the actual aperture had ceased. His gentle dog's eyes were worthy of a better face. He was shabby to the point of pathos, and his manner was nervous. The quartermaster's hearty hospitality hung awkwardly upon him. The quartermaster presented him to Adela.

"Mr Bardon, m'dear, Mr Horatio Bardon, from Melbourne. He knew my old friend Jacob Jeffries in London, and Jacob told him to look me up."

"That's true," said Mr Bardon; "but considering I was going to Melbourne I couldn't."

"How long have you been in Melbourne, Mr Bardon?" inquired Adela.

"Three years, ma'am." And his hearers were left to infer that they had been very bad years.

Mr Bardon had been unfortunate from birth. He had never made a success of anything, and, though he was very humble, he could never understand why. He had tried various avocations in one place, and was now following one calling in various places, one after another. He was at present a tea-merchant. He had never quite failed, nor had he ever succeeded. His habits were very frugal, and he looked and felt much poorer than he was. He had, indeed, a small, very small, income left him by his mother, and he religiously kept the small capital intact. He would no more have broken into it than he would have pawned his mother's wedding-ring.

The family at City Road found him difficult to entertain, but he came every time he was asked, and the quartermaster was continually inviting him out of compliment to his old friend Jacob. Mr Bardon's meagre reminiscences of Jacob, whom he had known only slightly, soon petered out, and with them all interest died out of his conversation. The Hydes religiously drank his tea, and the quartermaster put some business in his way, but would not invest any money with him for psychological reasons. The hours he spent in the drawing-room at the Laburnums were not happy ones. He seemed perpetually on the point of flight, but always lingered on to the very last minute. It was some time before anyone realized that he came to see Esther. When they did they left him to her. The two poor things clung together. Horatio had found at last a woman who did not frighten him, who was kind without being beautiful or clever or young or cheerful, who knew how to be poor and was willing to condole with him. Esther was a veritable oasis in the prosperous household.

Through the winter of 1848 Esther gradually unfolded. She sewed bunches of pink ribbon on her grey gown, and retrimmed her bonnet. She made the most amazing statements to Fanny, saying, "He's such a boy at heart," and, "Poor Mr Bardon, he has had a very tragic life, but he has never despaired." She had found a man who was kind, who did not expect too much, before whom she need not simulate youth, who did not frighten her deep-seated

virginity. The quartermaster chuckled. "It looks as if Cousin Esther was going to leave us. Dogged does it, my dear!" Fanny winced, but not at her parent's vulgarity. Bardon came more and more frequently, and every one heartily wished they would get it over. But they were not to be hurried, they must have time to savour their romance. They were becoming, Fanny thought, more and more every day a replica of Mr Moore and herself. The thought obsessed her. They stole the decorum away from her courtship. She imagined every one saying of her, as they said of Esther, "It's her last chance," and, "She's lucky to get a husband at the eleventh hour," and, "Who'd have thought it?" The thought was as Nessus' shirt.

One Thursday both gentlemen arrived at the Laburnums at half-past eight, and were ushered into the drawing-room together. Elsie's face wore a smirk as she returned to the kitchen. Even she saw comedy in the picture of Miss Fanny and Miss Esther sitting in the parlour, each with her *beau*. Lionel was feverish that night and Adela would not leave him. Presently the quartermaster, from boredom rather than tact, pleaded business to transact and withdrew, taking William with him. The lovers were alone—four of them. Bardon described the vicissitudes of the tea business. Esther gave him rapt attention. Fanny could have shaken her for her blatant flattery. As Esther expanded Fanny grew colder. Neither lady could suggest an adjournment—the forties did not know such boldness. So they sat through the dreadful evening. Elsie, entering with cakes and wine, restored a semblance of animation, but irreparable damage had been done.

That evening was to have been the climax of Mr Moore's courtship. The beautifully rounded periods of his declaration lay neatly stored in his brain ready for use, and alas! he carried them away unshed. The evening chilled as well as bored him, and the advice of a friend beat in his brain with painful iteration—"If you must marry a mature female, choose a widow." He had in the nethermost layer of his consciousness an uneasy feeling that he had been made to look ridiculous.

For Fanny the episode was closed. The following Thursday evening she was not at home when Mr Moore called. The rebuff was a bitter one, but he gave her another chance. He came on the Sunday bearing a small gift, and took Fanny by surprise in the garden. He could read nothing in her face. His gift lay between them on the garden table. Fanny raised her eyes from it to his face, her gaze very steady, very direct.

"I am sorry," she said, "I am very sorry, but I cannot accept a present; to do so would be a false pretence." And then, very firmly, "It is quite impossible."

She had answered a proposal before it was made. She knew that no explanation or justification was possible. There was nothing for him to do but to go. Outside the gate he broke into a mild sweat. God! What an uncomfortable woman!

That night Esther announced her engagement to Horatio Bardon, and the rejoicing at the Laburnums was not all feigned.

X

The tragedy at the mill came on them unawares. A curious, sinister troubling of still waters. They looked for a moment out of their security into another world, where strange shapes passed as in a dark glass. Euphemia, walking at dusk after rain along the edge of an old quarry, missed her footing and, falling fifteen feet, was drowned in two feet of water.

The quartermaster brought the news home one evening. The accident had occurred the day before and the inquest would be on the morrow. The quartermaster intended to go to the inquest and return with Benjamin to the mill, staying the night and going to the funeral the next day. Fanny said she would go with him to support Mrs Giles. Maud was staying at the City Road on one of her flying visits to town and Adelaide Gillam had come to see her. Fanny, coming downstairs from packing a carpet bag with a few necessities for the night, heard a veritable buzz of voices from the drawing-room.

"I do think it strange we've never seen Benjamin or Euphemia since their marriage. I don't think they ever came to town, and poor Euphemia was always fond of gaiety."

"Strange!" said Miss Adelaide, in her deep Cassandra tones. "Yes, strange indeed. There is more in this than we know, Mrs Hyde." Her dark eyes fixed upon Adela so that she almost jumped. Adela remembered Euphemia and Benjamin in the early days of her marriage—a dark, restless, ravaged girl and a pale, melancholy young man. She had been unfavourably impressed by Euphemia, especially by her manner to Benjamin, half predatory, half pleading, and by her shrill metallic gaiety. Euphemia had been, she reflected, the sort of person to whom things did happen. Adela had heard of the marriage shortly after her own, and then no more. It was clear from her dramatic pause that Miss Adelaide had something to tell.

"I did see her once after her marriage, just once. Mamma and I had been visiting Claire—it must be two years ago. It was very hot and dusty, we were very thirsty, and it occurred to us that it would be the civil thing to call upon Mrs Giles as we were passing. So we went in. Mrs Giles received us, and begged us to excuse Euphemia as she was indisposed. Mrs Giles was civil enough—more civil than usual—and she gave us tea. But it wasn't a comfortable house. She talked a lot about Mr Giles's health, and all the time she seemed to be listening. And there was nothing to listen to; it was such a quiet place. Well, Mamma and I thought we had better go and she didn't press us to stay. When we were coming away from the house I looked back, and I saw Euphemia."

Miss Adelaide paused again.

"Harpy!" thought Fanny.

"My dear, she was sitting at an open window and she was dressed for the evening in a satin gown cut very low, she must have put on all the jewellery she possessed, and her cheeks and lips were painted. She was just sitting there in the window with a mirror in her hand, but she wasn't using it, she was looking along the road and waiting. I assure you, Maud, my skin crept."

"She might have been waiting for Benjamin to come and take her to a ball at Parramatta," said Fanny sensibly.

"A ball in summer, and when she was too indisposed to see old friends?" boomed Miss Adelaide.

"People tell these conventional falsehoods every day; it is very natural."

Adelaide turned from this poor soil to Adela.

"I sometimes think, Mrs Hyde, that I have second sight."

"But what could it be?" cried Maud. "I'm sure poor Benjamin would be the kindest of husbands."

"Ah, what!" said Miss Adelaide as if she guessed but would not say. Fanny left the room. Fanny could never be added to or subtracted from any company without making a difference. Adela was thinking this, her eyes fixed pensively on the door through which her sister-in-law had just gone, when Maud bent toward her.

"Poor Fanny is so emotional!"

"Emotional!" echoed Adela.

"Yes, she cares far too much ever to let herself be happy. Underneath, you know."

Adela pondered this, as she went on looking at the door. Perhaps Fanny did find life too important to enjoy, and that was why she was not happy or at peace herself, and why she made other people uncomfortable.

XI

Fanny sat in an ante-room of the court-house, while coroner and jury considered the death of Euphemia Shirley. Mrs Giles had seemed not to want her during the proceedings, and she was glad to sit here by the open window. She was glad that she had come, for, though many of the curious had gathered to the inquest, no friend had come forward to speak to Mrs Giles. The bereaved mother was a spectral figure in the deepest mourning; a yellowed claw had darted out at Fanny from the voluminous draperies. She realized even before the veil was put back that Mrs Giles had aged immeasurably. It shocked Fanny as if she had looked on something not meant for her, or had drawn upon

herself the woman's undying malevolence by spying on her in an unmasked moment. But would she ever be able to fit the old mask on those shrunken features? Benjamin, though agitated, remained himself. He wiped his forehead continually, and seemed to apologize for having any private affairs at all.

Fanny waited. It was two o'clock on a summer day. The smell of the sun, the warm, moist smell of earth and grass, came through the window with the hum of bees. The hum of the court-room came to her from the closed door behind her. One was as significant as the other. She saw a square picture framed in the window, two whitewashed cottages each with a little winding path, a bed of red and yellow cockscomb, a sloping field, a row of gum-trees, a child in a blue sunbonnet carrying a basket. She felt very quiet and lonely in the little bare room, belonging neither to the drama behind her nor to the rural landscape before her. She felt, she thought inconsequently, rather like a jar of jam on the pantry shelf. The afternoon was like a long life. She ransacked her mind for words of comfort that she could speak to Mrs Giles. She was so inadequate, and, after all, she felt very little. Maud had welled with genuine grief and horror, even Adelaide had felt genuine interest, although she was rather horrible about it. Fanny was merely aware of tragedy. It stood up in her mind like a tall black obelisk. Fanny remembered that dinner party at the store, the night the *Rosamund* had come in, and how she had stood at the door to say good-bye to the Giles' and Euphemia's white hand had fluttered for a moment from the dark window of the carriage. She had had a presage of disaster even then in the midst of her happiness. She fell to wondering if Euphemia's death had a long root of tragedy in her life, or if it were merely the inconsequent accident of a moment. The story was plain and simple. The day had been hot and wet, a tropical February day, and at sunset the clouds had broken, showing a long stretch of exhausted primrose sky, lapped with dun-coloured clouds, like the marshes of a tidal river at ebb. Euphemia, already dressed for the evening in her flounced silk gown, had been tempted out

by the cool air. She had strolled on and on with her eyes on the pale sunset, and had come to the edge of the quarry where she had often walked before. She had stood there a moment, and the sodden earth had given way beneath her feet. Her head had struck the rock bottom of the quarry, and, stunned, she had lain in two feet of water and been drowned. It was an accident that might have happened to anyone. Fanny's mind affirmed that it was natural, but her heart tasted a deeper tragedy in that long strange silence and obscurity and then this sudden end.

In the middle of these thoughts it occurred to Fanny that the scene before her was very different from the English countryside. It was a long time now since she had compared them. She had been in Australia ten years, she was thirty-three. The sky was higher, lighter, harder, the colours pitched in another key, grey-browns, grey-greens, and those gum-trees gave hardly any shade, they turned the edges of their leaves to the sun. An economical landscape—nothing there, and yet you would remember it—economical and something else—was it aromatic? Fanny gave it up; the court was rising. Benjamin came in to fetch her. He was still wiping his forehead but he seemed relieved. "Death by misadventure," he told her, had been the jury's verdict. He was monstrously glad to have their word for it.

The Hyde's yellow phaeton in which they had come looked far too elegant for the occasion, and Fanny was almost ashamed to get into it. Benjamin and Mrs. Giles trundled away in a very rusty, seedy-looking, black coach, and Dolly had to be subdued to follow in its wake. Fanny had never been to the mill before. As she approached it now in the late afternoon sunshine it looked lonely and desolate. The mill was not working and looked as if it had been idle for a year. The dwelling, a gaunt weather-board structure with two rows of shuttered windows set flat in its rectangular face, had been painted a nondescript stone colour some five years before and was now in a state of despondent disrepair. All the blinds were drawn down and the whole house seemed gathered together to resist the thick golden

light. Only the large yellow glass handle of the front door caught the light and glowed like a gigantic topaz. The road to the mill was well worn, and thick with grey dust despite the rains, but the path to the house was overgrown and disused.

"No one ever came here," thought Fanny. She raised her eyes to the bare façade of the house and wondered at which window the bedizened Euphemia had sat and for what she had waited. They would never know now what dark secret had fluttered behind the restless eyes.

Mrs Giles was collapsing under the strain, and Fanny found with relief that she had to minister to the body instead of to the heart. In the parlour the quartermaster and Benjamin were drinking the funeral port.

"A bad business," said the quartermaster, shaking his head and looking at his wine.

"She was depressed," said Benjamin, " shockingly depressed. She was, sometimes, you know. She blamed herself for things she had never done, poor girl. There was no reason why she should be unhappy except for the things she imagined. We did our best to—to comfort and reassure her." He looked at the quartermaster himself for assurance.

"Your marriage was not a success then, Benjamin?" he said gently.

"It never was a marriage really—that was impossible. I grew more fond of her than I ever thought I could be, though, and more used to seeing her."

The quartermaster tapped his forehead, and Benjamin bowed his head. The quartermaster pursed his lips and nodded several times. Benjamin's head sank on his breast, and he spoke heavily. He was aware of no desire either to open his heart or to shield his secret. His heart was mute and docile as it had always been. It was natural to him to suffer in silence, not because his grief was too sacred for words, but because it never entered his head that anyone would share it with him. He never obtruded his feelings on anyone. He knew neither self-pity nor a sense of injustice. But it was easy to talk to the quartermaster, to tell him even very painful things. He just sat there with his knees apart and a big fist doubled up on each knee,

nodding his head as if he understood everything, and he was never shocked or surprised. But he had not the imagination to grasp all that that marriage had been. The walls might have told him of the bride, on her wedding-night, breaking under the tension of years, confessing to her husband in an agony of shame and remorse gross sins that she had never committed, entreating a forgiveness that he gave her a thousand times, praying for death, sinking down exhausted at last in a swoon; and this scene had recurred again and again, always the same, but the sharp edge of its misery never dimmed. Always Benjamin had met it with the same quiet, steady patience and reassuring tenderness as if she were his beloved child in a delirium. He had never wavered but had absorbed himself more and more in the business of the mill and the keeping of its books. Day by day he grew more meticulous, wrote a fairer hand, spent longer hours at work; his reports grew more voluminous and exact, his supervision more minute, till the workmen became uneasy and discontented. Between her fits of remorse, Euphemia lived a twisted, inward life, spent long hours on her toilet, scarcely noticed those about her, and seemed to be waiting for something or some one, they knew not what nor whom. She was utterly remote. Benjamin wondered with horror if, behind her fixed smile, her spirit were living out the sins she would later confess to him in such bitterness. When Benjamin and Mrs Giles talked to one another, they spoke as if Euphemia were perfectly normal; they had never once discussed her malady, yet they acted in perfect unison in their discouragement of visitors and their abstention from the life of their neighbours.

In another room of that wooden shell old Giles lay so wrapped up now in his invalidism that it is doubtful if he ever realized the tragedy in his home. His self-absorption left him hardly human, all his natural affections had withered away. Even Euphemia's death had hardly stirred him. When the quartermaster went presently and stood by his bedside, holding his cold heavy hand, all he could say was:

"This might have been the death of me. Shocks are so bad for my heart." There was fear but no grief in his eyes.

He complained that he was being neglected. Benjamin and the quartermaster were relieved when they could escape to the mill and discuss business.

Upstairs Mrs. Giles had come to life. She sat in her stubborn, carpet-covered armchair, with her feet on her angular foot-stool, and her black draperies flowing about her. She was much fallen away but her dark eyes were undimmed. She talked of Euphemia eagerly, almost desperately, swaddling her in lies. Fanny saw that her eyes were crafty, and tried to shut her ears against the torrent of words. She sat in the darkened room, with bowed head, making her spirit adamant to hold off this horrible old woman, but words and phrases crept in at the joints of her consciousness. Fanny wondered what would happen if she accused this woman, if she said to her suddenly, "You baited and bullied and tormented Euphemia till you broke down her mind, then you hid her away here, and said nothing and did nothing until one night she was killed, and no one can ever know whether it was an accident or her own act. And now you are smothering her in sweet lies as if you were icing a cake. Euphemia never found any truth or sincerity or understanding in this world. The dark form of her mother stood between her and the light."

Fanny sat still with bowed head, and now the thoughts in her mind were nearly as terrible as the words that besieged her ears.

The funeral was the next day. Euphemia, three days dead, was buried in the churchyard of St. Ann's, where she had been married. That afternoon Fanny and the quartermaster returned home. As soon as the mill was out of sight Fanny felt her spirits rise. They smiled at one another and the quartermaster shook the reins on Dolly's back.

"That's over," thought Fanny.

XII

So the decade drew to a close. Esther and her husband went to live in a dingy but respectable terrace house at the Glebe, and there, in the year of revolutions, their eldest

child was born and christened Phœbe. Alice followed a year later, and the Bardon quiver was more than full. Esther, by some miracle, continued to look, think, and talk like a spinster, and Bardon, by another miracle, kept bankruptcy at bay.

The household at the City Road went on its way. In his mother's eyes Lionel grew in beauty every day; for others he just grew and not very quickly. Adela thought him beautiful with his milk-white skin that showed a tracery of blue veins at temple and wrist, his fine gold curls, and wide hazel eyes. The quartermaster thought him girlish, but did not say so, as he was unwilling to blast the unfortunate child's life. James ceased very early to be a baby, and had to be breeched.

For Fanny, nothing changed. Day was added to day, and no day mattered very greatly. She thought that now she would soon be old and the bitterness of rebelllion would wear off. It was a melancholy thought that soon she would not even care that her life was wasted.

The quartermaster lost a little of his full-blooded optimism. He saw his world shrinking. The year 1848 was a bad year, and 1849 was worse. The population decreased almost visibly, and trade went with it. Crowded ships were sailing for the Californian goldfields almost every week. He said, "We must find gold too," but he said it without conviction. Fanny marked the difference in him, and was moved to the reflection that, after all, they had found happiness in inverse ratio to their strength. Lionel who was weakest was also happiest. He would always have whatever he wanted, somebody would reach it down for him. Maud was satisfied, because she was complacent and easily pleased. Adela was happy because she shirked her problems; she wrapped herself up in Lionel and turned her face away from the rest of life.

There were fewer dinner parties at the City Road, fewer visits to the theatre, fewer new gowns. The whole mechanism of their world seemed to be slowly running down.

CHAPTER VIII

GOLD

AMONG the disheartened settlers who left New South Wales for the new goldfields in California was Edward Hargraves, a farmer of the Bathurst district. He had owned his farm and worked it profitably for twenty years, when a succession of bad seasons, 1844—48, ruined him. He was a man of sanguine and impatient temper, intelligent and competent. It was very bitter to him to see his twenty years of hard work laid waste in five, through no fault of his own. In disgust he sold his farm for what it would fetch and joined the general exodus to California. In the Valley of San Joaquin he recovered gold at the rate of about six shillings a day, scarcely enough to keep starvation at bay in those expensive times. However, he moved on to the Sacramento River, and was washing out his thirty pounds a week when he astonished his mates by throwing in his share in the claim and returning to Australia. He had noticed a certain similarity between the gold-bearing areas of California and the country surrounding his farm at Bathurst. It came as an inspiration and a revelation. He was certain that there was gold in New South Wales and that he could find it. He could hardly return quickly enough. On the ship he talked freely of his theory, keeping only the locality a secret, but his fellow-passengers looked on him as an amiable idiot and smiled at his enthusiasm.

In Sydney it was the same. No one believed in his gold. There had been a whisper of gold now and then, but nothing had come of it; famous geologists had looked for it and found nothing; was it likely that this adventurer should be vouchsafed a revelation while he was working on the Sacramento? His very enthusiasm was against him.

Hargraves had practically no money left; money was tight in Sydney and his friends were unwilling to risk anything, so he had to borrow a few pounds at an exorbitantly high interest. Perhaps if he had gone to James Hyde it might have been different; their sanguine temperaments would have found much in common, and Hargraves was holding out a hope that would have made a young man of the quartermaster again in those meagre days.

But Hargraves did not go to the store in Windmill Street. He gave up hope of forming an expedition, and set out alone on a seedy and aged horse with the lightest possible equipment, crossed the Blue Mountains by the carriage road Macquarie had built, and on the 11th of February, 1851, came to the inn at Guyong. Here he made his first convert. The landlady listened to him with open mouth, beholding a vision of incredible riches. The next day she sent her young son to be Hargraves' help and guide. Hargraves knew exactly the spot at which he expected to find gold. The enthusiast and the boy rode for half a day under the burning February sun. They were exhausted when they reached their goal, the banks of the Lewes Pond Creek, a tributary of the Summer Hill. Hargraves was convinced that he would find gold here. They made a meal, then Hargraves took a spadeful of earth from the river-bank and washed it in a shallow tin dish. There was gold in the bottom of his pan. It was so simple, and yet so dramatic. The country boy stood by gaping with surprise and admiration.

Hargraves spent another eight days prospecting along the banks of the Summer Hill and the Macquarie, and in the Turon Mountains. Everywhere he found fine gold particles in his dish. He knew that the goldfields he had discovered must be at least seventy miles long and cover a wide area. One of his excursions led him as far as Dubbo, where he startled a friend by riding up to his homestead and announcing that there was gold within twenty yards of the doorstep. There was gold enough to make a finger-ring in memory of a dramatic moment.

It was now that Hargraves showed his quality, showed

that he was not the mountebank people had suspected. He displayed at once a competence in handling his advantage which is not usually thought to go with an enthusiastic nature. His first step was to call upon Mr Deas Thomson, the Colonial Secretary. He showed his specimens and asked that the Government Geologist be sent to verify his discovery. For himself he asked a reward of £500 to cover his borrowings and pay his immediate expenses. For anything further he was willing to wait till the worth of the diggings was proven.

A small cavalcade set out along the Parramatta Road, with Hargraves and the geologist at its head. Hargraves had an eye for advertisement, and as they went along gave the object of the expedition as much publicity as he could. James and Elsie, taking an afternoon walk along the Parramatta Road, may well have stopped to stare at the unusual sight—twelve horsemen and their retinue of pack-horses.

The geologist's report was favourable, and the fields were opened by Government proclamation. A galvanic shock ran through the whole community. In a few hours the news was all over the city and suburbs. Excited bakers delivered it with the bread, and hilarious butchers handed it in with the wrong joint. The six inns of Brickfield Hill buzzed with it, and the quartermaster in his counting-house raised his Wellingtonian nose and snuffed the change of atmosphere. The Californian discoveries had made men's minds as tinder to the rumour of gold. Energies that had lain dormant for years flared up, and the lethargy of the long depression was gone in a few days.

Long after the quartermaster met Hargraves and had the pleasure of wringing his hand in an elephantine grip and roaring:

"My God, sir, this is a pleasure! You're the greatest benefactor New South Wales has ever had, and I'm glad to tell you so. Damn me, but you're a man of sense, sir!"

He wrote to William at the time:

> I have met Hargraves, and he is a man after my own heart. Although his black beard and blue eyes make him look rather like an Irishman, he is a person of sense and a sound business

man. I consider him a great patriot as much for the manner in which he handled his discovery as for the discovery itself.

The conduct which won the quartermaster's approbation was not only Hargraves' straightforward and regular announcement of his find, so different from the suspicions and secretive conduct of others in similar circumstances but more especially his acumen in realizing that the major profits of the gold rush would not be found in pan or cradle. James Hyde took off his hat to a man who could combine patriotism and profit with such nicety, and he was one of the first to put his hand in his pocket and draw out £50 for the citizens' donation to the discoverer of gold.

II

Late one afternoon in early June, William rode back to the Laburnums, leaving the quartermaster at the store. Greeting Adela politely as she turned from comforting Lionel, whose sense of justice had just been outraged by James, he added:

"Papa bade me present his excuses. He is detained at the store to-night and will not return till late."

This was no unusual message, but Adela, quick to notice a strained note in her husband's voice, surprised in his face also a suppressed hint of trouble.

"What is it, William? What is wrong?" she asked, then wished that she had not, for William raised his eyebrows in the way she detested most and answered coldly:

"Wrong, my dear Adela? What should be wrong?"

"I beg you pardon, William. I feared some business trouble might—— There is nothing troubling you, then?"

William ignored the repeated question, and Adela knew she had transgressed his most rigid law—that women must not concern themselves in business. At dinner William remained preoccupied, taking little share in the conversation, which fluctuated between the shocking price of everything, due to the people leaving their proper work and going off to the goldfields, and the misdeeds of the children, who seemed to have spent a particularly riotous afternoon.

As they rose from the table William spoke again, with a visible effort.

"Adela, my dear, and Fanny, Papa has entrusted me with some news for you both. We have determined to extend our business activities to the goldfields if that should be found desirable upon further investigation, and Papa is to go almost at once to Bathurst and the fields to make arrangements."

He expected surprise and excitement, and was compelled to listen to and to answer eager questions. Fanny said little, but her thin face glowed with a new light that told of her sympathy with her father's project. Gold was in the air of Sydney. It was impossible to escape infection with the fever. Adela stopped in her eager questioning, and her face grew troubled.

"But, William, they say conditions are terrible there, and the fields are crowded with the most dreadful men. And he is quite an old man. Surely it is not for him to go."

William flushed darkly, and Adela saw that she had, almost for the first time in her life, penetrated the mask of frigid courtesy behind which he sheltered himself from any intimacy. But only for a moment. "You will pardon me, my dear Adela, if I do not discuss our business arrangements with you."

"Forgive me, William, I did not mean——" Adela faltered, wondering how she always contrived to be in the wrong.

"There is nothing to forgive," said William magnanimously. "I have much to do to-night, and shall work in the study till Papa returns."

William went to his study, but for a long time he did no work. Adela's words rankled; it seemed wrong that his father should go and that he, the young man, should remain behind. William had not been unobservant, too, of the glance Fanny had given him when his news was told. She had said nothing and had turned her eyes away at once, but William's own secret uneasiness had made him acutely sensitive to criticism. He knew what Fanny was thinking—"Oh! If I had William's chance—the chance he throws away!—if only I were a man!"

But, looking back on his conversation with his father, William could not see that he was wrong. He had offered to go when he saw that his father was determined. He had said openly and generously:

"I disapprove, Papa. It is only right that I should be frank. But, if you are determined on this, I am willing to go and investigate what openings there are."

"Good God, boy, are you blind?" the quartermaster had asked in genuine bewilderment. "Can't you see I *want* to go? I wouldn't be out of a thing like this for all the King's horses. I only put it to you first because it seemed fair to give youth the first chance and one of us must stay behind. But thank the stars it's to be you!"

William, to do him justice, was no coward, and it humiliated him to feel that his reluctance to join the army of gold-seekers might be so interpreted. He went again over the grounds of that reluctance, and satisfied himself anew that they were sound.

"It is madness, Papa," he had urged; "the news should never have been allowed to spread. The country has gone wild. Society will fall to pieces."

His father had been incredulous.

"It's the chance of a lifetime, son. Fortunes for all, lying there to be picked up. I knew there was gold in this country, I felt it all along—and now it is there for the asking. The country's made."

"You're wrong, Papa," William had persisted; "the country will be ruined. No country has ever got rich on gold. New South Wales—the whole of Australia—is suited for the wool-trade, and it will go to rack and ruin in no time if we drop that. Look at what Maud wrote about the farms around Camden, and what that fellow from Bathurst wrote in the *Herald* a few days ago. There'll not be a shepherd left in the countryside, there'll be nobody to shear a single sheep—unless the gold has petered out by spring."

"Petered out! There's gold here for the world to have; we'll be picking it up from the grass, and I must be in it. Why, William, lad, we couldn't miss a chance like that."

"I have always thought, Papa, that you believed in every man sticking to his trade—the cobbler to his last. I think we shall lose the substance for the shadow if we try to dig for gold."

"I'm sorry, William, I haven't made myself clear—too excited, I suppose. I don't want to dig for gold, though, bless my soul, it doesn't seem to take much skill—all you've got to do is dig a hole and shake a tin dish—and I won't refuse a nugget if I see one sticking its nose up at me from the grass. But we are going to stick to our trade. Just think what those fields will be like, men from everywhere just rushing in unprepared—no food, no necessities—water'll be dearer than gold soon, I'll be bound—and no thought of how to get them. That's where we'll come in. You read this morning's *Herald*, didn't you? Where is it? Listen, William; it's taken from the Bathurst paper," and the quartermaster read solemnly and impressively, punctuating his words with nods of extraordinary emphasis:

> "Flour which ranged from 26*s*. to 28*s*. per 100 lb. has been sold for 45*s*.

"That mill was the best piece of business I ever did, William.

> "Tea and sugar and almost every eatable commodity have advanced in almost equal proportions. But for very extensive supplies now on the way from Sydney flour would soon be at a famine price; and, should a rush take place from below, as may reasonably be expected, it is to be hoped that there are capitalists bold enough to adventure in one of the safest speculations of the times—the purchase of flour for the supply of this district.

"That's a challenge to us, William. No merchant worth his salt could let it pass. You must see that."

Warming to his work, the quartermaster explained his great idea.

"We'll establish depots and we'll organize a chain of stores on all the fields. I'll handle that end of it and you

can do the buying and transporting here. It's the chance of a lifetime to make big money and make it quick."

William had remained unenthusiastic.

"It may be so, Papa, but to me it seems far more important that we should carry out the work we have already established. Those two ships are lying at the wharf still, we can't get the men to unload them; half the crew of the *Ariadne* have deserted to the fields and we can't get our cargo away on her. The Governor says——"

"The Governor's an old woman," the quartermaster had interrupted rudely, "and you're another, William; you've got a son and heir—two, in fact—and you think so little of him and his inheritance that you'll lose a chance of a thousand lifetimes and not put out a finger to take it for him." Then, as he saw William's face change, his tone had softened. "William, lad, we're not going to quarrel, but it's got me mad to hear the way these officials, and the squatters too, talk about the greatest chance the colony's ever had drifting away from here to the gold-diggings in California. Now they'll come from the ends of the earth to us. England 'll send no more convicts—you can't send convicts to a country thick with gold, it'll do more for us than forty anti-transportation leagues—but the best blood she has will pour in and be glad of the chance. It'll make us a nation, not a dump for rascals. Now let's get down to business and work it all out."

William had known resistance to be useless. It was impossible, too, under the spell of his father's enthusiasm not to feel some sense of the golden prospects before them. The ordinary business of the store was for the time suspended; coastal trade was in abeyance. Crews were deserting their ships and making for the fields, their captains in many instances going too. Ships came almost daily into the harbour but few sailed from it, for no labour could be secured to unload and reload them. Whaling and sealing were almost wiped out, the adventure of gold-digging had an irresistible appeal to the hard-bitten whaling-crews. Nor were the wool prospects much better. The pastoral industry, which had weathered the severe depression of the early

forties by recourse to boiling down the sheep for their tallow and was now firmly re-established as the staple industry of the colony, was threatened once more with eclipse. Farmers, shepherds, labourers of all kinds, were leaving their farms and flocks to care for themselves, and joining the stream that led to the goldfields. Small wonder that the squatters as a class bitterly resented the change and loudly proclaimed the Government's folly in allowing the discovery to become publicly known. They applauded the caution shown by Governor Gipps a few years earlier in persuading the Rev. Mr Clarke to keep his discovery of gold secret, "for fear," as he justly said, "of the serious consequences which were to be apprehended among such a population"; and contrasted it with the ill-advised rashness of the present Government.

The city itself would soon be deserted. Professional men of all classes, clerks, mechanics, and labourers were feeling the lure of gold too strong to resist, and were hastening across the Blue Mountains to Ophir or to the Turon. Whole streets of houses would soon be standing empty and were being sold for a mere song. William had already turned his thoughts to the speculative profits to be made by buying these from owners anxious to realize on them at once and get to the fields, and holding them till the inevitable reflux to the city sent prices and house rents soaring to the skies. Left in control of the business, he reflected now, he should certainly develop it along these lines. The last consideration, the increased responsibility for the control of the business that would devolve on him, unconsciously but surely did as much as anything to reconcile William to this new and alarming change in their lives. He prepared to enter into arrangements energetically. Only deep down in his heart still rankled the thought that it was his part to go, his father's to stay. He tried once with unconscious sophistry to lend a more heroic colour to his inaction. The police force, the night-watchmen, and the other guardians of law and order were also being tempted away by the glitter of gold, and it was feared that the city would be left unprotected.

"It is hardly safe for the women and children to be left unprotected. Some must stay to guard them," said William. "Not only has the police force been reduced, but so many of the respectable citizens have gone, too, that the city will be handed over to roguery of all kinds."

"It might be so," answered the quartermaster drily, "but that all the rogues will go too."

But there was little time for thought or argument of any kind in the rush and bustle of those days. The quartermaster was eager to be off at once. It was difficult to imagine that he was now in his sixty-fourth year. Always strong and vigorous, the excitement of his prospective adventure of the fields gave him a second youth, a new energy. William, as always, was forced to admire his father in action.

There was much to be arranged. The quartermaster was to ride by stages to Bathurst, leading a pack-horse laden with immediate necessities. More wagons and draught-horses were to be bought and provisions acquired as cheaply as possible. Fortunately the mill had its contracts with the farmers for wheat quite secure. The wagons had to be loaded with provisions and equipment and were to follow as rapidly as possible. The first loads would be speculative, but the quartermaster knew pretty well what would be needed. He had seen some of the earlier gold-seekers leaving Sydney, their sole equipment carried in their hands or packed on their backs. The bare necessities of life—food, the means of preparing it, canvas tents and blankets for shelter and warmth, and simple equipment for the digging operations—would be quite safe and certain to be needed. Later he should have to arrange to send word to William of just what supplies were needed from time to time. At present the great trouble was labour. Only two of the regular hands at the store remained—George, whose mind had probably not yet grasped the fact that gold had been discovered in New South Wales, and Jackie, now a young man of twenty-two, who had so far made no move. Jem had been among the first to leave Sydney to go west; Tom, the second waggoner, and the man who had replaced old Libby had gone together a fortnight later. Even old

Libby, whose duties at the Laburnums had grown more and more nominal, was talking of going to the diggings, till the quartermaster solemnly confided the family to his care.

"Mr William will be working night and day, you see, Libby, and there's no one I'd care to leave in charge but you."

Immensely gratified, but grumbling at his great sacrifice of prospective wealth, old Libby consented to stay. The problem at the store was not so easy. George would have to go with one wagon, and another man must be hired to go with the second. It would be easy enough to get some one to go—hundreds would be thankful for the lift—but more difficult perhaps to get some one to return; the quartermaster, however, decided that that problem must be left to the future. He was certain he could find some discontented digger or other person anxious to return. Jackie would stay to help William in the work of the store and in the transport of provisions. They would be very short-handed and must engage whatever labour they could when things became urgent. Benjamin could be trusted to keep the mill working, if any man could. But there was no one in the office. It was impossible for William to attend to the clerical work as well, and it seemed equally impossible to secure some trustworthy man.

Two nights before the quartermaster was to leave, Fanny said to him as they rose from dinner:

"Papa, I want to talk to you. Can you spare me a few moments now?"

"My dear, I've a ton of work waiting."

"I know, Papa, it's a shame to trouble you when you're busy, but I shan't have another chance."

"What is it, Fan? Anything wrong?"

"No, no, Papa. It's only this—— William, would you mind letting me talk to Papa alone for a moment?"

"I beg your pardon, Fanny," apologized William stiffly, as he followed his wife to the drawing-room.

"Fan, you're not in any trouble again, are you?"

Fanny winced at that "again," but came to the point briskly.

"Papa, I asked you once before to find a place for me in the store. You wouldn't then, but things have changed now. You can't get people to work for you. If I were in the office you would not be entrusting your business secrets to a stranger. You know I can do things. The household accounts are trifles, I know, but did you ever find a mistake in them? You can't say I ought to look after the household. It's Adela's house and has no room for me. Papa, you're a good business man. Is it good business to be short of labour on one side and have idle hands on the other?"

Fanny paused and looked at her father. It was perhaps the longest speech she had made for years. It was the fruit of many hours and nights of thought. It was her last bid for release. She had little hope of success, for she knew the strength of her father's prejudices, but it had seemed to be a last chance. What she did not know was that few men's prejudices can stand out for ever against real need. The quartermaster was genuinely relieved.

"You're a good girl, Fan, to think of it. Come down to-morrow and we'll introduce you to the books. It'll be a real relief to have you there."

Fanny was incredulous.

"Papa, what will William say? Do you mean it?"

"William will be too busy to say anything. There, there, my dear, I haven't made you a present except of some very hard work. God bless my soul, but women get queerer every day!"

William did not take it quite so easily, but as time went on Fanny slipped more and more securely into the work of the firm. The shortage of labour was so great, Fanny's devotion and capability so apparent, that William could not resist. So for a few brief years Fanny found satisfaction.

III

Early on the morning of Saturday, the 7th of June, the quartermaster set out for Bathurst. He left much to be arranged, but he was too impatient to be off, to delay any longer. The whole family walked from the Laburnums

to where the City Road ran into the Parramatta Road, to see him ride away to the west. His last word as he mounted was for James, who was too proud in the possession of a new hoop and stick, the gift of his grandfather, to take much interest in the farewells. William went back to the house, but Adela, Fanny, and the children stood and watched the quartermaster out of sight. A lump rose in Adela's throat. It seemed terrifying to her, and somehow pathetic, that he should be going forth alone on a quest that was surely for the young and strong. His own children seldom saw anything but their father's strength. Adela often surprised in herself an unaccountable pity and tenderness for him. Sometimes as she watched him talking or romping boisterously with James she would feel it well up within her and she could realize something of what the boy meant to him, the heir to the heritage he was building. Since Lionel's birth Adela had gained a new insight, a new sympathy. Sometimes, too, she wondered, though she repelled it as disloyalty, if the quartermaster were disappointed ever so slightly in his son, that he should set such store upon his grandson? Had his enthusiams beaten as vainly against William's imperviousness as Adela's own early aspirations had done? Something of all this was in her mind as, with Lionel clinging to her skirts, she watched the quartermaster's upright figure, sitting awkwardly to his horse, recede into the distance.

Fanny watched him too, but her thoughts were very different. She envied him passionately his chance of adventure, of life; she despised William more vehemently than he really deserved for his refusal to go, but above all she exulted that all this had brought her her chance. She glorified the office routine into a magnificent adventure. She felt happier than she had been for years. She called James, and they walked slowly back to the house.

IV

The quartermaster's absence left a blank in the family life. Adela had not realized how much she would miss

him. His unfailing good humour and boisterous generosity had made life more human. With his going William seemed more constrained, Fanny more aloof. But for the children Adela would have been very much alone. As it was she was happy.

Some time had to pass before they could hope to get definite news from the quartermaster. Only a few days had elapsed when news came of another character. The rush of gold seekers to the west continued, but it met an almost equal stream of disappointed diggers returning to the city. In the first flush of enthusiasm many had gone to Summer Hill Creek ill-prepared for even a fortnight's work. They had imagined that the gold was there, on the surface, simply waiting to be shovelled into their bags. When they arrived, hundreds, thousands were already at work, digging, washing their dirt in the tiny stream, eagerly seizing upon the minute grains. The day of the nugget had not yet come. Disappointed, many had lounged away a week or two on the fields and then returned to spread the report that the gold to be found was not worth the work of digging. Many of these men, angry and disillusioned, had met Mr Hargraves as he returned to the fields, and he had narrowly escaped being lynched at their hands. These people were now beginning to straggle back to the city.

William found it difficult to refrain from the ignoble triumph of one who has been justified in his caution. He would have stopped the despatch of the wagons had not the first already set out only a day later than the quartermaster. Fanny was frankly terrified; she had not yet established herself, and her emancipation might be again withheld. The whole city was disorganized with alternate hope and disappointment. Conflicting rumours of fabulous wealth and of ruined hopes came hand in hand, and the workers at Windmill Street and the household at City Road reacted to them according to the temperament of each.

At last, after what seemed an eternity of suspense but was in reality thirteen days, news came from the quartermaster.

As Fanny sat in the office at Windmill Street, checking and re-checking bills for merchandise which had just arrived

from England and listening to the disconsolate sound of drizzling rain dripping down the walls, she looked up to find the familiar figure of Jem before her. So natural did his presence seem that it was some moments before she realized that she had last seen Jem on the evening before his abrupt departure for Ophir, and that only yesterday she had vainly tried to reassure Mrs Jem, who had given him up as lost.

"Why, Jem!" she cried, then saw the letter he was holding out to her, addressed in her father's sprawling hand. She ran into the courtyard, crying "William!" William was hard at work at the uncongenial task of unloading stores. Casual labour was almost unobtainable now, and when a ship came in, every hand was needed to unload the welcome freight. William was perspiring freely, though the weather was cold, and in no good humour.

"Where did you see Mr Hyde, Jem? And what are you doing with yourself?"

"I'm working for Mr Hyde, Mr William. He'll tell you how it come about. I'll do this job for you." He shuffled sheepishly down to the wharf. Fanny called after him.

"Jem, Jem, you must go round to Lucy, she is nearly distracted about you."

But Jem was already at work.

"A few hours more won't harm her, Miss Fanny. It's good to be back agen."

They read the letter eagerly. The quartermaster had made an unwonted effort with his pen.

THE DIGGINGS
June 16th

DEAR WILLIAM AND GIRLS,

I hope this finds you all well. I am in good trim, though fear the rheumatics will have a go at me before long. The ground is very wet. Got here on Thursday—a slow trip up, but it's a steep pull over the Mountains, though the road is pretty good. Wagons got to Bathurst Saturday night, a good trip, and we got some of the stuff out here by Monday. I've got my store fixed up ship-shape; it's made of bark and canvas and it's near Yorkey's Corner just where the first pick

was struck. No shortage of labour. Could get more than I want just for their rations. All our first lot of stuff went in two hours at tip-top prices, and diggers are waiting with open mouths for more. George and his mate are bringing it out as fast as they can. We struck just the right stuff. I sold the bacon at 3*s.* the lb. and flour at 1*s.* Seems a wicked price. Canvas and blankets all gone as it's wet all the time and bitter cold. Most of these poor fools had nothing to shelter with. My one mistake was the gun. Everybody brought them, but we're all a bit ashamed of them now, as everything is quite peaceable and quiet.

Keep the supplies going, William. I'll put a list in this of what I want. I'm going on to the Turon as soon as I get this going. I've my eye on a good man to take charge here. There's a Government notice up here about the Turon, but some miners are shy of going, remembering the starvation here. I want 'em to feel that no matter where they go Hyde's stores'll follow them.

Jem is taking this, you'll be surprised to see. Poor lad! he was nearly starving when I met him trying to get back. Lots of them have had enough of gold-digging already, but there's plenty of gold here, for those who come prepared. I've got nearly 250 oz. gold already, and it's worth £3 4*s.* 6*d.* the oz.

Well, no more news for now, William. Give the little chaps a hug from their grandad. Love to the girls from

Your affec. father,

JAMES HYDE

V

The quartermaster was not a ready writer, but he had been wholly absorbed in the drama of life in these early days of gold. Every moment of his journey had been full of interest. His night at the little inn, called the Weatherboard Hut, his ascent of Mount York, and his first view of the magnificent Bathurst plains from its heights were all stages in the glorious adventure. As he first rode into Bathurst he saw crowds of destitute men tramping into the town; even his optimism might have been checked, had not an even greater number been pouring out of the town

toward Ophir. It was here that he met Jem; Jem was almost at the last extremity, and he had been amazed and overjoyed to see his old master, and had even wept a little at being taken into employment once more. The quartermaster could have employed a dozen men at the cost of their rations alone. He selected four and sent them back with Jem to the fields. He was relieved that most of the disappointed seekers agreed that there was gold, but the hard work in unceasing rain without shelter and often without food had proved too much. Some turned back without a minute's trial, others struggled on till sheer necessity compelled them to stop. Even if they found a little gold they could buy no food, for there was little to be obtained and that little at famine prices.

The quartermaster rode out to Ophir; in two hours he had counted seventy men returning on foot, and had received a genuine thrill on encountering a party of horsemen all armed and carrying gold. He dined that day at Mr Kerr's farm—"Scotch Harry" was known to all the miners and was driving a rattling trade supplying them with meals of mutton and damper at two shillings a meal. The quartermaster noticed some children peeping round the door at him. He called to them, for he was fond of children and a great favourite with them, but they ran away. Their father explained that they had spent their lives in this retired spot, seeing no more than a dozen people in a year. Now hundreds passed daily, and they were terrified. They had not known there were so many people in the world.

During the afternoon the quartermaster pushed on; as he drew nearer he could hardly restrain his impatience. He attempted to take a short cut through the open box-forest, and lost his way as evening approached. It had been pouring all day and for many days, and the ground was already sodden; rain came on now in heavy gusts, against which canvas could offer little protection. It was impossible to light a fire. The quartermaster thought ruefully of his rheumatism, but philosophically prepared for the worst. He rode on slowly, through the deepening dusk, hallooing and calling, but the sound seemed to fall back from the

heavy sheets of rain. At last a light twinkled in the distance, and with relief the quartermaster and his weary horses stumbled up to a tiny shepherd's hut, strongly made of slabs and plastered with mud. A man came to the door and bade him welcome. The horses were fed and tethered in as sheltered a place as possible, and soon the quartermaster was drying his soaked clothes and warming his benumbed limbs before a blazing fire. There were two men there, one old with a long patriarchal beard and eyes of a surprising blue, the other a middle-aged man with a weary haggard face and a haunted expression. They made the quartermaster very welcome and laid the freedom of their one bare room at his disposal. It was a meagre place, but its dryness and warmth were very comforting.

The floor was hard earth, the walls were bare slabs—a roughly hewn table, two stools, a rude shelf running along one side, on which stood a few simple cooking utensils, plates and mugs, in one corner a folded pile of coarse blankets, constituted the furnishings. On the wall over the fire was a crudely coloured picture of the coronation of Queen Victoria, and below it a rough drawing, old and dirty, of a little girl. Light was supplied by the leaping flames of the fire and a wick burning in a tin of oil on the table.

The quartermaster explained his business and his hosts listened attentively. They were shepherds, the old man explained, on Mr Edgar's station, and had been for many years. He had first come to the district nearly nineteen years ago.

"There were flocks of kangaroos here then. The cattle drove them away. Now the gold-diggers are driving the cattle away. David wasn't with me then, sir. It's only ten years since he came."

"Ten years," repeated David slowly, "ten years since I came."

The quartermaster felt uncomfortable, he hardly knew why, and asked them hastily if they intended to join the gold-diggers.

"Later, perhaps, sir," said the old man—his name, he said, was Swedish Ole—"but not just yet. We have to get

our discharge. We are bound to our work, you see, and we need our wages to fit us out. These men that pass every day are mad to think they can get gold without tools or money or clothes. Strangers come; they think they can get food somehow and quarters somewhere in the bush. But the country hereabouts is very hard in winter, sleet and snow for weeks at a time, or rain like this, or frosts that'll freeze all the water in the ditches by morning. It's a hard enough life in winter looking after the sheep and the cattle, with a warm fire waiting for us and our rations coming regular every week. But we're cosy here, don't you think?"

"It's splendid," said the quartermaster heartily; "but I don't know how you resist the gold, lying at your very door-step, so to speak."

"We've known for years it was there, sir. We've got a little bit year by year, whenever we had time we'd dig and wash it out. It's easy enough to find. Look!" Swedish Ole went to the shelf, and, taking down an old, discoloured tin, opened it and showed it to the quartermaster. A little pile of golden grains, between thirty and forty oz., the quartermaster judged, lay there. It excited him—it was the first raw gold he had handled. He had seen it before, he had even seen in Bathurst the lump that, after exhibition in the windows of Bathurst and Sydney, was to go to London to be displayed in the Great Exhibition. But as he handled the tiny glittering grains he marvelled afresh at the sobriety of these men's views.

"Did you never speak of your find?" he asked.

"No, sir. You see, we saw very few people here in all those years, and David and I like the quiet. That'll be gone now."

The rain had ceased by now, and the watery moon was struggling through the clouds. There was no sound but the crackling of wood and the *drip*, *drip* of water from the trees outside. It was utterly peaceful. The quartermaster found it impossible to believe that a few hours' ride would bring him to the noise and rush and fever of the goldfields. The man David with an inarticulate sound slipped out.

Swedish Ole made as if to follow, but dropped back to his stool. After a pause he spoke again.

"You must pardon Dave's manners, sir. He's real proud and glad to have you here, but he's a bit queer, you know, and it often comes all back to him on a wet windy night, poor fellow."

"What comes back to him, Swedish Ole?" asked the quartermaster, and his voice was hushed to the quietness of the night. The oil wick had burnt away, and the flames sent a strange light over the two men and distorted and exaggerated their shadows on the wall behind. Swedish Ole's gentle old voice told the story.

"Ten years ago, sir, Dave lost his wife. They lived in Sydney and they had one little girl. Dave hadn't always been very kind to his wife, he used to drink too much. As she lay dying she begged him to take care of little Molly and said she would haunt him all his life if he didn't look after her well. Dave swore he would, but he drank harder than ever after his wife's death, and one dreadful night, when the rain was coming down in torrents and the wind heavy, the little girl took ill and cried very pitiful. He hears her crying now clearer than he heard it then, my poor Dave. He tried to go to the doctor for her, but he was too drunk and he fell and lay in a stupor all night long, and next morning the little child was dead. Dave went mad then, sir. He thought he had murdered her—I suppose that was true too in a way, but he'd loved her very much, always, and he ran away from Sydney and plunged into the bush, trying to escape his haunts. For he is haunted, sir, by his wife, and by the little child's cries. For days he walked and ran and got across the mountains somehow, though how he lived I can't say. That's how he came to me, ten years ago. I found him in the bush, starving and mad. He had a dreadful brain-fever then and I thought he was hiding from justice. Only later I found that man's law couldn't touch him, only God's. When he got better he was like you see now, very quiet. Most times he forgets, but sometimes it all comes back and they haunt him. He will keep that picture there," and he pointed to the little girl over the fireplace;

"it's just a fancy picture but he thinks it's his Molly and it seems to make him happy sometimes. We've lived here together ever since. Mr Edgar's very good. He gives me double rations, but of course no pay for Dave, though he's a wonderful hand with the sheep. Will you excuse me now, sir, if I go to him? I don't like to leave him long on a night like this."

He slipped away, and the quartermaster rolled himself in his blankets at one side of the fire and slept the sleep of the just.

Next morning Swedish Ole woke him before dawn, for the shepherds had to be early afield. When he would have paid for his night's lodging and meals, they refused in astonishment.

"Come and see us again," called Swedish Ole as he rode away.

The quartermaster was now right in the Gold Country. It was very rough going, as the country seemed to consist of masses of rock-crested hills, thrown together in complete confusion, cut up by narrow precipitous gullies through which small creeks twisted down to join the Summer Hill. From the top of a high bluff, overlooking the Summer Hill, the quartermaster had his first glimpse of the gold-diggings. The point immediately below him was occupied by upward of a dozen different parties digging into the hill. Some were digging with picks or forks, others carrying earth in every conceivable kind of container—buckets, dishes, barrows, shovels—others again were rocking the cradles or shaking tin pans in the stream, washing away the dirt from the golden grains, which being heavier sink to the bottom. The quartermaster was to grow very familiar with the gold-digger's characteristic implement the 'cradle', a box resting on wooden rockers with a coarse sieve fitted into one end, which sifted the larger stones and earth. The quartermaster reflected now that the gold seekers probably had not minded the wet much as they had continually to pour water into the sieve with one hand while rocking with the other, and this kept them in a constant state of dampness. Many of the poorer diggers had no

cradle, and used only a tin dish, but their progress was necessarily much slower. The morning air, crisp and clean after the rain, was filled with noises, the washing of the water in the iron boxes of the cradles, the trundling of barrows, the clink of the picks, the sound of men's voices. Opposite, the banks were dotted with tents and shelters of bark or branches built against the box or gum-trees.

The quartermaster had not yet found his way back to the main road from Bathurst. He pushed on and found it where it intersected the creek a mile farther up. The spot was congested with every form of traffic, due to the difficulty of proceeding. It was nicknamed the Township. The quartermaster with difficulty got through, and pushed up the bed of the creek. He presented himself to the Assistant Commissioner, who welcomed him warmly when he learned that his intention was to organize a system of supplies, and especially that the first wagons were due to arrive almost at once. By the time Jem and his four assistants had arrived the site for his tent and store was fixed. In the very heart of the busy scene, under some great swamp-oaks near the water's edge, two tents were pitched, and a rough shed built of logs and bark, and made as secure as possible against rain and other intruders. When George arrived from Bathurst with the first instalment of provisions, everything was ready, and the quartermaster hung out his crude sign "Hyde's Stores" with a satisfied heart.

VI

When the quartermaster had left Sydney in the mid-winter of the year 1851 no one, not even himself, had dreamed that he would not be home again, except for a few brief visits, for rather more than six years. But the early rush to the gold-diggings which had inspired his first venture in these fields was only a foretaste of what was to come. In July, shortly after he had established his store at Ophir and was very busy organizing another at the Turon, a field even richer, news came which electrified not Australia alone, but the whole world. An aboriginal shepherd had

accidentally found a nugget of solid gold on the station occupied by Dr Kerr near Bathurst, protruding almost naked from the grass. It weighed 108¾ lb. The quartermaster had seen it himself. Kerr's Hundredweight became a name to conjure with. The news spread like a fire fanned by high winds. Where hundreds had come hitherto, now came thousands. The newly formed Victorian Government, alarmed at the exodus of people to the mother colony, offered rewards to the discoverer of gold in payable quantities within Victoria, and a few weeks later rival claimants were clamouring for the reward. The great goldfields of Victoria were opened up, and people from every quarter of the globe poured into the country. The imagination of the world was taken by storm by the great profusion in which the gold was found. Single nuggets were sold for over ten thousand pounds. Kerr's Hundredweight was only the harbinger of the shining masses that were to follow. The great fields Bunninyong, Ballarat, and Mount Alexander sprang into activity almost overnight, and the continent seemed to be sown with gold.

The profits of Hyde's Stores, big enough on the scattered New South Wales fields, were more than trebled on the richer Victorian mines, though the difficulties of organization were greater for the quartermaster as they were so far from his base of supplies. He had, however, organized the local supplies as far as possible and had established a buying and distributing centre in Melbourne with a capable man in charge, and there was no limit to the prices a lucky miner would pay after he had struck it rich. He had nearly as possible accomplished his desire that Hyde's Stores should follow wherever the miners might go. It was impossible for him to retain control of such a vast complex organization, and, as conditions settled down to regularity in each district, local supplies had increased and his elaborate transport scheme became unnecessary. The quartermaster had therefore followed the practice of selling his store and its goodwill as soon as he could get its price. Now at the end of six years he could boast that he had amassed a fortune, and in addition still held most profitable shares in three or

four stores at some of the principal mines, though his active interest was given up. His one regret, as he looked back over those crowded years, was that he had not thought of organizing a coaching system too. Cobb's Coaches had first been organized on the Victorian fields, and brought in later years to New South Wales. Their development in the northern state lay in the hands of Rutherford, with whom the quartermaster had struck up an acquaintance. He admired the idea immensely, it was the kind of business that appealed to him, and its extension and success was always a source of half-regretful pride in later years.

He came back now in the spring of 1857 to take up life in a changed city. The golden years had altered the face of Sydney. The quartermaster, nearly seventy now, felt almost lost. The very streets seemed unfamiliar. George Street was extending westward, it would soon be at their very doors. Opposite the Laburnums the Great Hall of the University was rising stone by stone, to be a beautiful and enduring monument to the courage and wisdom of its founders. The old landmarks that had stood like friendly figures along the road to Windmill Street seemed to have disappeared or to have "suffered a sea-change." The cathedral church of St Andrew was complete; now that the scaffolding and workmen were gone it looked as if it had stood there for years. Farther down the street workmen were busy on the new post office, which was to be a splendid building. Postal business had had to be transferred to Wynyard Square while the building in George Street was going up. Farther down still, George Street North was almost entirely handed over to the Chinese element. Thousands of Chinese had poured into the country in the early years of the gold rush. Now, after the manner of their race, they had congregated together and made a distinctive Chinese quarter in the heart of the city. They were already felt to be a menace, and the quartermaster experienced a vague distaste every time he passed through this crowded quarter. But the change he noticed most in George Street was the number of banks that had arisen since he had left; George Street seemed lined with banking

establishments. Nothing else marked so clearly the growth of Sydney's wealth and commerce during the six years of his absence.

The old quagmire in which Pitt Street had terminated was filled in, and a respectable thoroughfare to the Quay substituted. The railway from Sydney to Parramatta, an apparently hopeless scheme when he left, languishing for funds and men to carry on the work, was now an accomplished fact.

The very atmosphere seemed different. The problems that had aroused storms of hatred, indignation, or enthusiasm were old history now. The transportation question even in its milder ticket-of-leave form was dead. Gold had killed it. The fierce battles of the political arena had waxed and waned. Mr Wentworth and his select committee had accomplished their task of preparing a self-governing constitution for New South Wales; the political frenzy that his unfortunate suggestion of an hereditary aristocracy had aroused, the inflamed denunciations of Messrs Parkes and Darvall, had gone with the proposal itself into the limbo of the past. New questions, new frenzies, new denunciations had taken their place, but it took time to settle once more to a sense of their importance.

No less changed were the store at Windmill Street and the household in the City Road.

CHAPTER IX

JAMES AND LIONEL

WHEN during the six years of his exile the quartermaster thought of his home it was as a haven of idyllic tranquillity, a place where life was quiet, even, and unchanging, in sharp contrast to the vortex of the goldfield on which he found himself. Lying on his hard and narrow bed in some bark hut, his limbs twitching with fatigue, and the sound of steady soaking winter rain in his ears, or, his money counted for the day, sitting in the doorway of some other bark hut smoking a last pipe under the summer stars, the invisible stir of the fields all about him, he would see little bright pictures of the household at City Road. These pictures were very distinct and motionless—Fanny cutting bread and butter and smiling; William with James on his shoulder; James pulling up plants in the garden; Adela sewing, with Lionel in his starched petticoats sitting on the door beside her. He always saw Adela very clearly. He saw her brown hair parted in the middle and drawn smooth and shining over her ears, her wide brow that even he recognized as beautiful, her hazel eyes that were both courageous and timid, her mouth too soft for the line of concentration in which it was set, her swift, delicate hands at work upon a little garment. For six years Adela sat sewing and Fanny cut thin bread and butter. The pictures would not move or come to life. They simply prolonged themselves till his mind felt like a piece of elastic stretched to its uttermost, and he, by an effort of will, wrenched it away to other topics. When he came to Sydney on his flying visits he was always astonished to find the boys grown taller and his pretty abstractions filled out with life. He rarely had time to think of anything but business. All his energies of

mind and body were in play, and he asked nothing better of life.

Life at the City Road was by no means as static as the quartermaster imagined it. Two boys cannot grow from babyhood almost to adolescence without some ferment, and where James was there would always be alarms and excursions. The reburgeoning of life throughout the country did not leave this household quite untouched, secluded though it was. They were important years for everybody, and did not pass without storms, though these were often only of tea-cup magnitude. James provided most of the visible excitement. Within a month of the quartermaster's departure, when the nugget rush was at its height, James must have his adventures too.

Leaning over the front gate of the Laburnums you could catch an intriguing glimpse of the Parramatta Road and the procession that now wound along it, you could smell the dust and hear divers exciting sounds. It reminded James not a little of the circus his grandpapa had taken him to a couple of months before. He spent rapt hours hanging on the gate, taking in the vague heady excitement of it all. Adela, wondering why he was so quiet and good, searched the garden for him and found him sitting on the gate. It occurred to her at once that watching from afar might pall and that he would soon be slipping through the gate to have a closer view. She made the mistake of trying to frighten him, and forbade him to climb on the gate again.

All the next morning James struggled with temptation. The gate drew him like a magnet. He was unhappy and disconsolate, and the strain of being good made him a cross little boy. As a punishment Adela gave him no jam with his pudding. Conscious of his essential virtue, he boiled with rage, for was not jam the very *raison d'être* of the flabby white pudding? After dinner he walked in the garden all alone and the gate drew him again. He found himself at the gate. He was determined to commit one sin, but not two; he would look at the Parramatta Road, but he would not climb on the gate. He opened the gate and stood outside. He could see a cart passing and several men on

foot. He did not think it looked dangerous. Mamma was probably mistaken, for, after all, Mamma was only a lady and ladies were frightened of everything, even frogs and darling little white mice. He wanted very much to see what there was to fear. He started to run down the City Road, running lest virtue overtake him and bring him back.

He stood at the corner, his feet well planted, and watched the people as they passed. It was a sight that might have interested anyone. In those days the Parramatta Road was the most interesting thing in New South Wales. It showed a nation in the making. Anyone who had watched the Parramatta Road for a week might have seen strange sights. Along it passed men on horseback and on foot; covered wagons with children peeping out at the back; sundowners tramping soberly and evenly, contemptuous of the amateurs who thought they could get to the fields in a hop, step, and a jump; smart young men with bright new billy-cans in their hands and blankets across their backs, travelling light and fast; pedantic fellows with queer implements hung all over their persons; pedlars hurrying to the first halting-place; scholars reading as they tramped. As James watched with large eyes two men passed him, one wheeling a pram piled with his worldly goods, the other driving a sheep which he meant to eat by the way. Then a man and woman approached. She was a buxom woman, and her skirt was kilted up to her knees. The man led a little shaggy donkey loaded with his goods. He wore a cabbage-tree hat and under it a wide, impudent, friendly smile. James heard him say to the woman as he drew near:

"He has a lucky face." Then, "Wish us luck, young master."

James was anxious to be polite because he liked the donkey very much, but he did not know what to say.

"Wish us as much gold as we can carry away, and the strength of ten to carry it," prompted the woman in her soft, broad speech.

"Yes," said James, and repeated the wish.

"Now give us something that is yours"—and the man

tweaked the fine cambric handkerchief out of James's pocket. "Look, young master, we will fasten it to Neddy's head-band. It is for luck, see! And when we come back we'll bring you a nugget as big as my hat."

"When will you come back?" asked James.

"Well, say in a month from to-day. Can you count up to a month?"

"I can ask Papa."

"Don't forget, then."

They moved on. "Good-bye," called James.

He watched the shaggy rump of the little donkey move away. He wished he had had a carrot to give him and thought he'd bring one next time he came, in case.

Somehow he could not bear to let the little donkey go. When it seemed that he must lose sight of him in another second he stepped down into the road and began to follow. Other people were coming up, and he fell in with them. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should be walking with all these people, and he half expected to find his grandpapa round the next bend. He passed almost unnoticed. There were stranger sights on the road than a well-dressed boy of seven, and his demeanour was so staid and responsible that no one dreamed he could be lost.

"Where is your papa?" a man did ask him.

"Down there," said James, pointing vaguely in the direction of home, and the man was satisfied.

James heard and saw many things that jumbled together in his mind in a fascinating, crazy pattern.

A man urged his tired horse past him, "Come up, Jenny! Thou'lt have golden shoes coming back."

Behind him a dark, joyless Welshman harangued his neighbour. "I tell thee," he said, "it is flat against the ordinances of God to go picking up fortunes out of the ground. It was never meant. We're doing God out of the labour which is His due. He said Adam was to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, and we ought to do it. Look you, brother, it is plain sin and blasphemy."

"But you are going there yourself, brother."

"Aye, brother, I was ever a sinner."

A closed carriage with an hilarious coachman on the box and a portly, rich-looking man inside drove by, parting the disputants, choking the little group with dust.

"Ah!" said some one bitterly. "The rich will be there before us and take it all as they always do."

James seemed to have come a long way. He was getting tired. A woman, herself heavily laden, took his hand, and without a word they walked on together. James began to flag in earnest.

"Is it far?" he said.

"A long way yet," said the woman, in a dead voice.

"Will we get there before dark?"

"No, not to-night or to-morrow either."

A rich voice behind him began to repeat a rhyme:

> "How many miles to Babylon?
> Three score and ten.
> Shall we be there by candlelight?
> Yes, there and back again."

James looked back, but he could not see who had spoken. Just then a horseman came by, riding recklessly in the hope of arriving at an inn before all the beds were taken. In the scatter James lost the friendly hand, and this misfortune brought him to the end of his resources.

The sun was going down. James stood in the dust of the wayside and the tears ran down his dirty cheeks. Presently a man with a spade over his shoulder and a knotted handkerchief in his hand stopped by him.

"What is it, sonny?"

"Papa!" said James.

"Where's your pa?"

James pointed back along the road.

"He'll be along presently. Don't 'ee cry."

"He won't," said James.

"Not lost, are you?"

"Yes," said James.

"Says he's lost," said the man to another. "What'll we do with him?"

Several people had gathered round James now, and he

was crying bitterly in their midst. A horseman was forced to draw rein by the little crowd. Seeing he was a man of authority a bystander told him that the child was lost. James saw a man in a long riding-cloak, with a face like an eagle, bending down to him from a very tall horse. James held his tears.

"Well, my boy, what is your name?"

"Master James Hyde," quoted the child.

"Good God!" cried the gentleman, staring at him. "I wonder if you are the famous grandson!"

James didn't seem to know.

"Where do you live?"

He pointed dumbly back.

"Well, well!" said the gentleman, and then with inspiration, "What does your mamma call your papa?"

"My love," said James promptly.

"Nothing else?"

"Oh, yes—William—that's his name."

"That settles it," said the gentleman. "You are the famous grandson, and I suppose there's nothing to do but to take you back home."

Willing hands lifted James to the saddle, where he lay upon his saviour's breast, within his arms, and under the shadow of his eagle-nose. *Clipperty-clop* riding home through the dusk on a very tall horse indeed.

When he awoke the next morning James was inordinately pleased with his adventure. Adela could hear him expatiating on his wonderful exploits to Elsie as she dressed the boys in the morning, Elsie's credulous "La's" and "Did you ever's" adding fuel to the tale.

After breakfast, as he was running out to play, she called him to her in the morning-room. He came reluctantly, and as she drew him to her knee with her arm about him she felt his little body stiffen with obstinacy. He knew of old that gesture, and she that obstinate stiffening.

"I want to talk to you, dear, before you go out to play. Do you realize that you were a very naughty little boy yesterday to disobey Mamma and frighten us all by getting lost. I am not going to punish you, because I think the

fright you had was punishment enough. Tell Mamma you are sorry."

James squirmed and hung his head, presenting to his mamma's gaze a dark ruffled crown and the tips of two red ears.

"Come, James, own up like a good boy, and I shall forgive you."

"I wasn't frightened, Mamma."

"Are you sorry because you were disobedient, frightened Papa and Mamma, and were a nuisance to Captain Newboult?"

James wanted to say he was sorry and get it over, but he couldn't. His tongue swelled up in his mouth and he couldn't say anything.

"Very well, then, tell me why you think you have not been a naughty boy. I heard you talking to Elsie and Lionel this morning. You seemed to think you were rather a hero."

James tried not to listen to her lest he should burst into tears.

"James, James, whatever is the matter with you? Mamma only wants you to be good and happy."

She put her hand under his chin and raised his face so that she could look into his eyes, which were like the troubled eyes of a dumb animal.

"Do you want me to punish you?"

He shook his head.

"Then give Mamma a kiss, and she'll know you are sorry and forgive you."

He flung himself upon her breast and kissed her chin. Adela held him a moment, then put him down.

"There!" she said in a matter-of-fact tone. "You can run out and play now."

He escaped. In a moment she heard him shouting in the garden, clattering down the path with a lot of unnecessary noise. She sighed.

"I'm sure I do my best, but nothing makes any impression on him. He simply doesn't understand when he does wrong."

Adela found James difficult. He had inherited the

quartermaster's exceptional vitality, William's reserve, and Fanny's pride. The combination required more tact and sympathy than Adela was ever able to give her elder son. The quartermaster could always manage James, simply because he never realized that he was a problem. He was content to treat the little boy as an individual from the first, to leave his childish reserves untouched, and when he needed correction to be firm, definite, and brief.

Adela made the mistake of being too gentle and too inquisitive. She was always seeking for some secret passage to the child's mind, trying to screw from him avowals of weakness and affection that would deliver him into her hand. When he was naughty, instead of punishing or ignoring it, she would patiently try to force an admission of sorrow from him. She longed, really, to break down in him the pride and reserve that were unassailable in his father. Of course neither of them was aware of this. But James early became aware of discomfort and distress in the presence of his mother. It was as if he walked into a cobweb, and when he put up his hands to push away the obstacle there was nothing, yet his skin crept with the contact. She put him at a disadvantage and tried to keep him there. To shake off this faint, unpleasant feeling, he tried to assert himself, and the only way that he knew of asserting himself was to make a noise and behave violently. This put him further in the wrong and reinforced the legend that he was a naughty boy. In the last resort he could always reimburse his self-respect by comparing himself, either forcibly or verbally, with his little brother, and this carried him further out of favour still. To say that he was not happy would be an exaggeration. He was at odds with his mamma, he wanted her to love him, and, still more, he wanted her to admire him, but he would not admit even to himself that he wanted these things. When he most wanted them he allowed himself to be drawn into doing and saying things he knew she would not like. He could not help his perversity, he was sucked into it against his will, and once having behaved badly he went on to something worse out of obstinacy.

He never had any of these strange feelings with his papa. William took his son seriously. They went out for solemn walks, William pointing out objects of interest, or telling James about the ships in port, or even striding along in silence plunged in his own thoughts while the little boy panted manfully at his side, ready to die rather than ask him to walk slowly. William scarcely treated James as a child at all, never tried to improve his mind or talked down to him or tried to find out what he was thinking. James worshipped him, which Adela thought strange, for William did not seem at all the colourful kind of character one would expect to appeal to a child. With his Aunt Fanny, too, he got on very well, and he early formed the habit of going to her when sheer necessity drove him to seek adult aid. She made no fuss and never told tales, though she could be very stern too.

James was very happy playing alone in the garden, but then he had generally to share his games with Lionel, and that was not the same thing, for Lionel never seemed old enough or strong enough to do the things he wanted to do. And it was no good showing off to Lionel, because he was never impressed.

James was sent out into the garden and told to play with Lionel. But he did not want to play. He ran away and hid and then jumped out on Lionel. Lionel pursued him doggedly and quite good-humouredly from path to path. This in itself was a sort of game and Lionel rather liked playing it. He nearly caught James at the grotto. The grotto was an ugly contrivance of artificial red stone that had been built in a bare corner of the garden. Had it come up to expectation it would have been a mound of ferns and flowers embowering a little cave, but alas! nothing but a few clumps of pig's-face throve in the pockets of earth it provided, and the cave was a stained and mildewed gap. James called it his castle and would climb to the top with great agility. To-day he danced precariously on the summit, mashing to a pulp the thick green leaves of a branch of pig's-face under his feet, while he jeered at Lionel's attack on the lower reaches of his fastness. Even the humble

pig's-face will turn. The crushed leaves made James's pinnacle slippery and in the midst of a whoop he shot head foremost to the ground. The pig's-face could hardly have arranged for the sharp stone in his path, but there was one, and it inflicted a deep cut on his forehead. Lionel's screams brought old Libby, who carried James, half stunned and bleeding freely, to the kitchen. Adela and Katie tried to staunch the blood while Elsie was sent for the doctor.

"Oh, dear!" cried Katie. "Oh, dear! If only Miss Fanny was here. Lord save us, what a boy!"

The doctor came and sewed up James's forehead. James sat on a kitchen chair while he did it, as white as chalk and as mute. Every one said what a brave boy he was. Adela put him to bed, and sat by his side reading to him and giving him sips of milk and barley-water out of a downstairs glass.

"Was I a brave boy, Mamma?"

"Yes, darling, a very brave boy."

"I didn't cry, did I, Mamma?"

"No, dear, but don't boast and spoil it."

He put up his hand and gave a gentle, friendly little tug at her pendant as if he were a baby again. The gas was lowered to a blue pip of light and Adela crept away. An hour later, coming back to see if James still slept, she heard a whimper, but it came from Lionel's bed.

"What is it, my treasure?"

"I want a cut on my forehead too, Mamma. I want a bandage like James."

"Little goose."

James heard her talking to Lionel in a soft tender murmur that he thought was like one of the little new fluffy chicks. She took his glass and gave Lionel a sip out of it to quieten him. James pretended that he was still asleep. A wave of disappointment smote him as he heard the rustle of her skirts going downstairs again. Hot tears forced themselves between his tightly shut eyelids. Whatever was the good of being brave, he asked himself.

II

Day by day, pebble by pebble, a barrier rose up between the brothers. James was nearly always the aggressor. Lionel was not a quarrelsome child, though he was sometimes peevish. He had a tantalizing way of ignoring James's superiority; the more James boasted, the less impressed was Lionel. He had the air of having the winning trick up his sleeve. He was content with what he had; he did not covet his father's friendship, or his aunt's good opinion, but the proud child wanted everything.

No irreparable harm was done yet. As the boys grew older they bickered no more than is natural to children. There were truces and alliances that lasted sometimes for weeks. They formed a more or less permanent combination against their tutor, an earnest, cadaverous, delicate young Englishman named Monk. He had come to Australia in the early months of the gold-rush, to make a fortune, but had found the fields at once too unrefined and too damp. After three weeks the rector of St Barnabas, whose cousin he was, found him on his doorstep with a hollow cough, no plans, and no money. William had recently consulted the rector about educating James. Fanny had already taught him his letters, and he had several copybooks full of pot-hooks and hangers to his credit. In the normal course of affairs Fanny would have taught him the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but she had gone to the store. Adela was theoretically too busy, and her spelling was such that William lacked confidence in her erudition. So William sought a tutor, and tutors in those days were as scarce as any other labour. The rector presented Bertram Monk and William seized him with almost equal ardour. He had studied for the Church, but at the last moment had been seized by doubts. These doubts had been the romance of his life. He related his spiritual struggles with terrible earnestness to anyone who would listen. But his doubts were of such a technical nature that neither the rector nor William felt they would menace the salvation of two little boys, though Mr Monk conscientiously expounded his

heresies before he accepted the appointment. Neither of his pupils cared much for him. He was lank and unprepossessing, and used up on the little boys the manner he had prepared for keeping young men in the Church. James especially, who was easily disgusted by any sort of physical imperfection, found his perpetual snuffling cold hateful. Adela did not like him because he always seemed to want to sympathize with her, and it was some time before she realized that this had no personal application but was merely his manner for ladies.

Mr Monk considered himself something of an educationist. He administered the unpalatable facts of a primary education with the false heartiness of the family physician administering a black draught. Yet even his heartiness had the air of having been left out in the rain, as if he had been suddenly overtaken by conscientious scruples as to the morality of duping his young pupils.

"Come now, James," he would say seductively, "let us have *The Good Sailor*—no, no, we'll make it *The Bad Sailor* to-day, because he's such a difficult, wicked fellow—ha! ha! No, no, my dear boy, that was nice, but not *quite* right. I wonder if little Lionel could tell us where it was wrong." But Lionel, who thought it waste of energy to listen when not actually addressed, never could.

Together the boys perpetrated a number of very crude practical jokes on their tutor, but he never lost his temper. Even while he was wiping water from his collar, or winding up the string that they had too optimistically expected to trip him, he would say with a faded laugh, "Oh, very ingenious, but not quite kind, do you think? I know it's just your sense of fun, but still I think James had better write *esse* out twice before he goes to play. And what can Lionel do?" He would beam waterily as if about to announce a treat. "I think he had better write a page in his copybook, because his writing is so deplorable."

Several minutes before one of their *coups de classe* was timed to come off Lionel generally became quite helpless with laughter. James found it one of his most irritating characteristics, and it spoilt many a good game. When, as

an Indian brave, James was about to scalp the paleface Lionel, it was disconcerting to hear him squeal, "Oh, you do look funny!" and see him double up with mirth. Their half-serious efforts to find gold in the garden were succeeded by the more fashionable game of bushrangers. Lionel was always cast for the *rôle* of victim, and developed considerable resource in outwitting Blunderbuss Bill, the prince of thieves. After a long and exciting chase he would calmly open the old carpet-bag with which the lonely traveller was equipped, turn it upside-down, and say blandly, "I didn't bring any gold to-day; I left it all at home in Mamma's wardrobe." And he would roll about on the ground laughing to think the bushranger had had his trouble for nothing. Or, after he had been shot dead, he would jump up and push James over suddenly from behind.

"But you're dead," James would expostulate.

"I'm not dead."

"Yes, you are."

"I couldn't knock you over if I was dead, so I can't be dead, can I?"

When he was getting the worst of an encounter Lionel would suddenly cry, "You thought I was a lonely traveller, but I'm not, I'm a p'leeceman."

"You're not—we're playing you're a digger."

"I was only pretending I was playing I was a digger, to take you in. I'm a p'leeceman really, and this is the gaol."

You couldn't teach Lionel. Still, these were only the half-earnest bitings of puppies at play. But as they grew older they grew farther apart—something hard and bitter entered even into their games. Their disagreements were strong on a thread of permanent resentment. Adela did not see it. They were good, they were naughty, the days passed. She was too close to them to see the pattern that their lives were weaving. William did not see it because he was a domestic idealist. He clung desperately to the belief that his wife and sons were models. James could do no wrong, being his son, and Lionel was a good little thing, a mere baby. Besides, William was very busy making money, and

impressing himself on the industrial life of the city by the sheer dead weight of his integrity.

Fanny, who had the sharpest eyes in the house, saw nothing until it was too late. She was absorbed in her work at the store and rarely came home before the boys were in bed. She worked very hard and it suited her. The store and its clients came to take her for granted, and William had to admit that feminine influence had not destroyed the discipline of his establishment. She had many a long and secret tussle with the books, wrinkling her brow and biting her lower lip in a frantic effort of concentration. She appealed to Benjamin in her difficulties, turning back the books till she found his frail exquisite figures, and copying his methods. To William she never appealed, and only the old ledgers and the ink-stained table beheld her perplexities. George and Jackie assured the new hands that she was a chip off the old block and that Miss Fanny knew what she was about, but soon she ceased to be a wonder, and the slim, neat figure in grey alpaca or brown merino became as much a part of the office furniture as the swivel chair or the calf-bound ledgers. At first, confident masculine footsteps would approach the office, check suddenly, and retreat in disorder to a muttered, "Beg pardon, miss"; and tyrants of the fo'c'sle had to be driven into the office, where they sat nervously on the edges of their chairs. But they soon found out that Fanny was neither formidable nor soft, that she was the most businesslike person in the place. She had the rare power of sinking her sex in her individuality.

At first she had been frightened by the multiplicity of her duties and by the jungle of figures into which she was so suddenly plunged. The business vocabulary was almost like a foreign language. Then she would think, "Well, after all, it can't be anything but common sense," and, clearing away the entangling undergrowth of jargon, she found that it *was* only common sense. In three months she had thoroughly mastered the routine of her work. The jargon of trade no longer obscured it, but seemed rather a sacred hieroglyphic that she was proud to use. Now the dry bones of her clerical work began to take on flesh. She

learned to see the business as a compact and intricate whole. Day by day she pieced it together from the books, from William, and from the conversation of customers. She had thought of work at the store as providing her with occupation and independence, but she found in it romance as well. She did not know it, but the quartermaster's feelings toward his life work were being reproduced in her. She saw their business as a plastic, living thing, and she admired it as she could never have admired any work of art. When she once mastered their contents she could read much between the lines of the ledgers, the fluctuations of trade and her father's reactions to them. She told herself again and again that Papa was always right. Fanny yielded to something in her blood that she had held off in her youth, she reverted to the type of her family and found her own peculiar fruitfulness. She came in time to admire William; she admired him as a good workman may admire a fine machine. William's work had the precision, accuracy, and cleanliness of the finest machine. He would never have built up the business, as the quartermaster had done—he lacked his father's width of vision and broad-chested optimism—but he maintained and expanded it. He had the money-sense.

William had performed a fine feat of organization, nearly as difficult as and far more thankless than his father's, at his end of the goldfields victualling business. When goods were scarce and labour almost unprocurable he kept up supplies to the quartermaster, somehow. He had astounding energy for such an apparently dry and prim young man. Wherever advantage showed a whisker he seized it. Foreseeing the shortage of wheat, he prebought enough to keep the mill in full working for months to come, at a price that first amazed and then disgusted the farmers. He did not spare himself or anyone else. Even in those difficult and erratic times he always kept his word and fulfilled his obligations. Fanny had been rather surprised, when she first went to Windmill Street, to find that the firm had large sums of money lying idle in house property, just when houses were a glut on the market. William explained it to her in a moment of expansiveness.

"This gold-fever is like a disease, but a very profitable one to us. Every one is anxious to sell houses and other property now, to get away to the fields. Presently they will be even more anxious to buy them back, but naturally prices will have gone up then. You see, Fanny, it was an opportunity. House property is not nearly as elusive as gold." William was as near geniality as he could get. A few months had justified William. Men who had made fortunes on the fields wished to buy houses, and men who had lost what they had, drifted back to the city and had to live somewhere. Strangers from overseas, attracted by gold, must be sheltered. The very pressure of increased population drove up the price of houses, after the sudden artificial slump in the first months of the rush. William, who had bought in the slump, sold in the scarcity, and the transactions were most profitable. It was then that Fanny first realized the possibilities of riches to be snatched in the vast snapdragon of the gold-rush.

On the waterfront, Fanny found herself in the van of progress. The port grew, almost like one of those Japanese paper plants that unfold in water, growing up and blooming in a minute. In 1852 William took his family in solemn procession to see the *Chusan*, the first steamship to cross the world to Australia, but a few years later they were so common in the harbour that even the urchins playing by the quays hardly stopped their games to look at them. In the fifties the famous wool-clippers began to come out, and were another nine days' wonder, then they too became an everyday affair. Fanny learned to take the ever-increasing business that came to Hyde and Son's as phlegmatically as William did, and to look back on the girl who had first come to the office in 1851 as a very crude, enthusiastic person, hardly recognizable as herself.

III

Maud was in town again. The lease of the house at Balmain was up in September 1857, and Maud and the children had gone into residence there for a few months.

Humphrey divided his time between Balmain and Camden, Maud burst into dinner-parties and balls, and soon showed Sydney that her years in the country had damped neither her taste in, nor ardour for, dress. Humphrey had made a fortune from his wool and wheat in the gold-rush, after nearly losing one in the forties, and Maud was not loath to spend it. Fanny said she was reverting to type, and reminded her that she had said all along that Maud would never be able to do without the gaieties of town. But she said it laughing, and not at all in the spirit of I-told-you-so. Outwardly Fanny's work at the store set a wider gulf between her life and Maud's, but in the light of her new independence and interests her old differences with her sister almost faded from her memory and she could dismiss them with other feverish and morbid symptoms of the arid years.

"Miss Fanny, Miss Fanny, there's a whole lot of the quality coming down Windmill Street. I think they are coming here."

"What sort of quality, Harry?"

"Why, miss, there's a very elegant lady, and a great many young ladies and gentlemen."

"That will be my sister, Mrs Humphrey Gillam, and her family," said Fanny with decision. "Show them in here, Harry, and you had better acquaint Mr William."

It was indeed Maud coming full sail down Windmill Street, a veritable pyramid of apricot flounces over the largest crinoline and tightest bodice in Sydney. She was flanked by two stout little boys in light check pantaloons and peaked caps, her sons James and Charles, who flatly refused to resemble the grandparents after whom they had been named In the second row of the cavalcade were Francie, Fanny's god-daughter, now thirteen years old and already elegant in long frilled pantalettes, tartan skirts, and a leghorn hat with streamers, and Maud the younger, who exactly reproduced her sister's toilet, for those were the days when children went in sets. The nursemaid Louisa brought up the rear with little Albert in her arms. Only the infant Eugenia was absent—for Maud by this

time had amassed six children and thought it was enough. Windmill Street did not see a sight like this every day. The passers-by stopped to stare, and a sailor who had been espaliered upon a sunny wall all the morning spat with the deepest appreciation.

Maud and her family bore down upon the store. It offered the same black rectangular face to the street, the same lamp hung from its wrought-iron gibbet.

"Here we are, my loves," she cried. She stood again in the cavernous doorway of the store, before her the bright, remote, enamelled picture of the sun-steeped courtyard and blue water, and rising up from the vast, dusky store the old familiar *pot-pourri* of tar and brine and a hundred mellow mustinesses. The children clustered round her. This store had loomed large in their lives, and no reality could come up to the pictures Maud's tales had conjured up in their minds.

"Nasty smell!" said Charles, breathing out through his nose loudly and inhospitably.

"Dead fish," said Jimmy sapiently. But Maud didn't hear these dampening remarks. She was embracing Fanny, as if this were a reunion after long absence with her as well as with the store.

"Oh, my love, I've brought the babies to see the store. I simply had to come. We left the carriage in George Street and walked down through the Rocks, but it wasn't a success. They didn't look nearly as sinister as they used to, and much dirtier. Oh, dear, I'm sure Louisa will never be the same again! She's got more superior with every step we took. Come and kiss your Aunt Fanny, my pets. La, don't you miss the whale-oil? Is there a boat in? I promised the boys a boat, it's the only thing that kept poor Jimmy going up and down all those dreadful steps. There, boys, what did I say? There's a boat at the wharf. And there's Jackie. I do declare he has whiskers."

The old stores heard Maud's laugh again. It was as gay as when she flirted with Benjamin there more than a dozen years ago. It made Fanny feel just a little like a ghost.

"Want a drink!" cried Albert.

"Want a drink!" yelled Jimmy and Charles.

"You shall have one out of the old pump," cried Maud sentimentally.

William appeared.

"My dear Maud!"

"Yes, I know, William. I didn't say I was coming because I knew you would say no. My pets, come and kiss your Uncle William." Two of the pets were distinctly unkissable, as they had found a tub of molasses. "Uncle William will take you down and show you the boats now," she said persuasively, "and we'll go upstairs."

"You'll be disappointed in upstairs," said Fanny. "It's quite changed."

"More stairs," said little Maud.

"Oh, I must just peep!" said big Maud. The parlour looked like an old junk-shop, and George had to clear a way for Maud's crinoline to get to the window in the room that used to be hers and Fanny's.

"Is this where you used to sleep, Mamma?"

"Yes, love."

"Oh!"

"Was it out there you fell off Star and Mr Shirley caught you?"

"Yes, my precious, it was."

"Oh!"

"Did you look out of this window and see Captain Hildebrand coming in with the big tub?"

"Why, yes, Francie, this very window."

"Oh!"

"I think, after all, it was a mistake to bring them. Now, Maudie, don't sit down, you'll get all dusty. But, Fanny, it was so romantic, wasn't it?"

"I never think it's romantic now."

"Mamma, Mamma, the carriage has come. Will I go and fetch the boys?"

The sisters were alone in the dismantled room that had once been theirs. In the moment while the clatter of the children's feet still sounded on the bare stairs they measured the years that had passed, as one might measure the height

of a child by a mark on the wall. Fanny saw that for her the years had been like a dead and leafless branch that had suddenly blossomed again. The memories of this room had not been cast out with the narrow beds, the dusky cheval-glass, and the flounced dressing-table with its oval mirror between the candles. Under dust and commerce it bore its indelible character still. Fanny and Maud had come to this room as girls; before this there was nothing, nothing significant. From this point their lives had diverged. Fanny, to whom nothing had happened, was changed, and Maud, who had borne six children, was essentially the same. They smiled at one another a little helplessly, and turned to go.

IV

The quartermaster came home for good in the October of 1857. He was full of schemes and his return in no wise partook of the character of a retirement. He took it for granted that nothing would be changed at the store, and he gathered it back into his hand with a fine, hearty negligence.

To celebrate his return, and partly, too, because the visit to the store had filled her with sentiment, Maud gave a large all-day family party. As originally conceived, it was to include all the family and only the family, and they were to bring the children and be natural. Maud had a gift for parties. She could achieve elegance where her friends were only ponderous and costly.

She tackled this new enterprise in the spirit of an artist attempting a new medium. A family gathering, she saw, should be different in quality from any other form of entertainment. Its keynotes should be abundance and informality, it should be conceived in humour and carried out in tolerance. An annual unmasking and re-examination of its roots, she felt, would be a healthy and diverting institution for a climbing family like theirs. Yet when the list of guests was prepared Maud felt dissatisfied. Her side of the family was insufficiently represented. There was the family from the City Road, and she saw how perfectly right

the quartermaster would be at a party of this kind, and there were Esther and Horatio Bardon and their three little girls, for the Lord in His goodness had unexpectedly added a third olive-branch in '54—that was all. In the other scale was the great homogeneous mass of the Gillams, and most overpowering of all there was Adelaide. As her sisters-in-law and their husbands always came to her elegant parties, Maud feared that not even the quartermaster and the children would be able to humanize this one completely. Maud thought, drawing her velvety brows together in a frown which, though quite genuine, had a serio-comic effect. Inspiration came; she would not be pedantic about restricting the party to the family; she knew the very person who would neutralize Adelaide and produce the perfect chemic combination for a family gathering. This was Mrs Bertha Mussell, a widow who had been a girlhood friend of Adelaide's in the days before Papa Gillam made his fortune. Maud had known her slightly in the old days at the store, when she was still a visitor at the Gillams' house though every year edged nearer to the backstairs. An insensitive and loyal creature, it never occurred to her to drop her wealthy friends. When the Gillams moved from the Battery to the rural delights of Balmain the harbour rolled betwixt them and the faithful Bertha and gently washed her out of their lives. She was a florid, bountiful widow, well on the way to fifty, with a large heart, a large laugh, and a long tongue. It was hard to imagine that she and Adelaide had ever been bosom friends, and Adelaide could imagine it least of all. But youth is plastic, and they had been the two handsomest girls in the small society of waterfront store-keepers. As far as Maud could see, Bertha was the only past Adelaide had, and she would act as a solvent on the Gillam elegance. Then, partly to balance things and partly from a sentimental interest in Benjamin, who had been "one of themselves in the good old days," she added him and his mother-in-law to the list, and felt she had the ingredients for a really successful party.

When the day came the weather was perfect, a glittering day neither too hot nor too cold. Spring is an overrated

season in the sub-tropics, it is usually a precarious and windy interlude between summer and winter. Those who detest the winter dread a relapse into it, and those who dread the summer fear its instant onset. But there was nothing in the day of Maud's party to distress either kind of pessimist. It was a great day from its dawning. The children felt excitement in the air, and Albert wanted to know if it was Christmas.

Transport was not without its difficulties, but the first guests arrived at ten o'clock and the last by noon. Humphrey had sent his own boat to Man o' War Steps to fetch the Bardons and Bertha Mussell. Unfortunately he did not send anyone to introduce the parties, and the Bardons were far too refined to speak to strangers—except, alas! Mary. She was deeply attracted by the labyrinth of gold chains and semi-precious stones that rose and fell on Mrs Mussell's ample bosom, and was responding to Bertha's smiles with friendly wrigglings and finger-suckings until firmly checked by a bony maternal hand and told to look at the pretty boats. The brazen child was only three, and no one as yet suspected that she would turn out a credit to the family. Bertha, in self-defence, talked to the boatmen, and Esther discovered how really difficult it is to listen to a conversation without looking at the speakers, especially if one has guarded against the neuralgic peril of a water journey by putting cotton-wool in one's ears. Bardon took the opportunity to improve the minds of his offspring by pointing out the interesting features of marine and maritime life as they went along. They nevertheless enjoyed it very much.

Not far behind them was the veritable barge that the quartermaster had hired to transport his household. He was making as much as he could of the occasion and did not consider himself too old for a Breton sailor-hat with streamers of light blue ribbon. His remarks on sea-sickness, when they struck a slight swell, were so diverting that Katie, who was going as a sort of demi-guest, uttered a squeal of uncontrollable laughter, and he offered to throw her overboard. Lionel exclaimed with such enthusiasm, "Oh, *yes*, Grandpapa!" that even William smiled at his son's precocious

sense of humour. The whole party dissolved into jollity and arrived in mellow holiday mood.

Adelaide Gillam had come early with a hamper of crockery.

"A fine day, my dear Maud," she boomed confidentially—and then dramatically, "I prayed for fine weather."

"So good of you, my love," said Maud, enthusiastically counting crockery. "And one dozen large plates in the shell design, is that right?"

"I hope you have plenty of castor-oil and lime-water. The young are so disgusting."

"Yes, dear," said Maud, still abstracted.

Actually on the brink of her party, she felt strangely nervous. It was even more portentous than she had expected. She comforted herself by reviewing again the material preparations for her guests. Long tables had been set out under the trees for the children, the tablecloths shone crisp bluish-white, dappled with the shadows of leaves. Soon they would groan under great plates of nice wholesome brown bread and butter, blue-rimmed bowls of barley broth, lightly boiled eggs, earthenware pots of honey, pitchers of milk and lemonade, pyramids of pale yellow pears, pie-dishes of milky rice pudding in paper frills—and a few, just a few, indigestibles that Maud's generous heart could not deny them on this festive day. It was a meal destined to be as beautiful as it was wholesome, but Maud had not thought of that, though her brain conjured up its whites and yellows, creams and blues and browns, with content. Within, in the majestic dining-room, a very different meal was laid out—a cold collation of poetic splendour. Cold chicken decorated with beetroot stars—"for succulence," as that wag, Phœbe's husband, said—breasts of chicken in aspic, moulds and pies and spiced meats, salads, tall glasses of celery, an épergne of grapes in bacchanalian abandon, *crêmes* and jellies, made with art and clarified with eggshell, *glacé* fruits, *gâteaux*, and wines. "Almost too splendid, too pretentious," Maud thought, and then cheered up—people would always forgive you a good table. The superior Louisa was deeply impressed. "Lor', ma'am," she said, "it's fit for a funeral, it is."

When Jimmy from his look-out signalled the imminent arrival of the first boat Maud started and turned a little pale.

"I have a little surprise for you, dear Adelaide," she cooed. "Your dear old friend Bertha Mussell—I believe she's coming now," and she floated away toward the landing-stage, smiling angelically, but feeling hollow and meagre within her crinoline.

V

Dinner was over. The very afternoon had a settled and satisfied look. It looked like the onset of eternity in a genteel heaven. Maud stood for a moment on the veranda in a small world of tranquillity that was her very own. From the drawing-room behind her came voices, and in the garden sloping graciously down to the water were glimpses of crinolines and coat-tails and children playing. Across the hum of voices behind her cut the squeals and laughter of the children, refined and clarified by the open air, and somehow, curiously, irrationally sad. From the moment when the first boat moored till this, Maud had not had a second to herself, but she rose to the surface now, looked about her, and saw that her party was a success. She had known one other moment of panic, when she saw all the children together waiting for their lunch. There were so many of them, and they were so young. For a moment they all seemed alike, dependent, waiting, turning their unmarked faces to the future. It had seemed so terribly dangerous for any family to have so many children, and six of them were hers. Then she was saying crisply:

"Come along, children. James shall be Papa and Francie shall be Mamma, and you'll all take care of the babies, won't you?"

And after that they had all been so very human that she couldn't possibly think of them as pathetic any longer. Looking at the children all together was like looking at a picture in which some figures were drawn in detail, some lightly sketched, and some just indicated. Among the many her own six took on new character and definiteness, and after them James and Lionel, and Sophia's ugly viva-

cious Laurel, and her two morose black-browed little brothers who were so curiously mature and dominant beside Phœbe's placid twins and Evelina's four pink-and-white cherubs. Most lightly sketched of all were the Bardon children, and yet they were the best-behaved children there. The good child's tragedy is that it is never noticed at all. Phœbe and Alice were such good little things, but it was evident to everybody that they had not been born with silver spoons in their mouths. Maud could see them now, standing in a prim row, Mary between the elder girls, their holland roundabouts as clean as when they arrived. She must go down and see why they weren't joining in the games with the other children. They were too good to take care of themselves. It was tiresome. Maud stepped down again into the hurly-burly of her party.

VI

The family gathering had resolved itself into two parties by a process of natural selection. Maud had left the drawing-room where the elder ladies sat, almost with relief. Her life in the country had helped to conceal from her what every Victorian woman knew, that marriage closed the doors on youth. Despite six children and thirty-five years she still felt young and more akin to the sprightly party out of doors than to the sedate one in the drawing-room.

In Maud's flounced and gilded drawing-room, beneath the portrait of Maud in rose-coloured silks done ten years ago and destined to hand down to her grandchildren that legend of perfect, saccharine amiability in which she was to lose her individuality, sat an assemblage of matrons and virgins of the Gillams and Hydes. In chairs of state on either side of the elaborate hearth sat the two rival old ladies of the party, Mrs Giles and Mrs Gillam. They had had something in common to begin with, but they were ending poles apart. Mrs Gillam billowed in black silk and real lace, her eyes still dark and dominant in a face that resembled a large cream puff. Mrs Giles was hard and tight, and gleaming still with the jet she had put on for Euphemia.

There was a sort of fierceness in the very way her bodice fastened, and contempt in the austerity of her gown. These two women had known and disapproved of each other for many years, and had not yet given up their long futile attempts to impress one another. Mrs Gillam found her patent of nobility in good fortune, Mrs Giles in misfortune. Their feud seemed as unimportant to the younger women as the quarrels of children. Mrs Gillam's daughters still maintained that "Mamma likes to see old Mrs Giles because they were girls together; they have great chats about old times." They were having one now.

Adelaide Gillam sat beside her mother; her devotion was constant and touching, and, her mother assured her, quite uncalled for. Bertha Mussell sat beside Adelaide, for had she not been brought here especially for Adelaide's pleasure? They too were having a great chat about old times. Esther Bardon sat beside Bertha, for Bertha was good-natured and unwary, and they had this in common that they neither possessed the Gillam hall-mark. Upon the sofa under the window lay Claire, looking as interesting as she could.

"How nice for dear Claire that her baby should have come just in time for the party," some one murmured. "It would have been—well, just a little humiliating for her, wouldn't it? Quite a baby-show!"

Although Claire had been married twelve years her first child was only a fortnight old, and was at this moment lying swathed in shawls on Maud's bed, drawing its every breath under the personal supervision of an elderly and trustworthy nurse. Adela and Sophia Franklin, Claire's sister, sat beside the sofa, and Claire offered them her experiences like rarities on a fine gold tray.

Adela was a little dazzled by so many people. She had not the pugnacious and inquisitive spirit that flourishes at a family party, and for all Maud's careful balancing this was very much a Gillam party. There was solidarity about the Gillams. When a woman of the Gillams married she proselytized her husband, conferring on him some of the sacred rights of a Gillam and incorporating him in the family defences. Adela was, too, minutely conscious of all

the tensions and constraints about her. She looked from face to face and saw how seriously they took themselves. She looked through the French windows and saw Maud step off the veranda and walk down into the garden. She raised her eyes to the rose-and-gold picture.

"Dear Maud!" said Claire. "She scarcely looks a day older."

"And just as amiable," snapped her mother across the room.

"She is surely the most amiable female alive."

"But does she worry enough?" Esther sighed. "I sometimes think of these poor dear little children." She sighed again. "They have no idea what a vale of tears this life is. Maud doesn't prepare them."

"Six children! How nice and how like the dear Queen!" Bertha was saying.

"Anyone can have six children; it's only the very clever ones that don't," Sophia replied quickly, in her metallic voice.

Every one was horrified except Mrs Gillam, who had not heard, and insisted on having the terrible remark repeated to her.

"Sophia would have been just like poor old Adelaide if she hadn't married," Claire murmured to Adela. Adela did not like Sophia much, and could not understand how she fascinated men. She was metallic and harsh and salty. Sophia was like her mother, and the child Laurel was like her—a vein of dark obsidian in the shining yellow metal of the Gillams. Adela had not seen Laurel for years, not since she was quite a baby, and the child had startled her—made her think of something, she did not quite know what. She pulled her mind back with a jerk. Claire was whispering again.

"Do watch Adelaide and Bertha."

"They were good old days, Addie," Bertha was saying. "Do you remember how we used to put on our best gowns and trot down to the barracks, and that shocking bad Captain Montmorency who paid us so much attention, and we never could be sure which of us he fancied and nearly quarrelled about it? And then we found out he had a wife

and eight children tucked away in a greengrocer's shop. We did laugh, and then we bought sixpenn'orth of trotters for supper and forgot all about him. Such a handsome girl Addie was, Mrs Bardon. If anyone had told me then she'd be an old maid I'd have laughed in her face."

Adelaide shuddered at the thought of the indiscreet trotters. "We were very young and foolish in those days."

"Of course we were, and what could be nicer than being young and foolish? I'm old and foolish now. I don't think all your money and fine bonnets have made you happy, Addie."

"I am perfectly happy," boomed the tormented Adelaide. "I have found something better than frivolity. The Reverend Cyril Mathews——"

"Oh, my dear, why didn't you tell me before?"

"The Reverend Cyril Mathews preached only last Sunday on the beauties of celibacy. I assure you, Sophia, a most chaste sermon—St Paul, you know, nothing to do with the perverse ideas Romanists hold on the subject. It just showed me what I'd been feeling. Of course St Paul was speaking as much of women as of men."

"Well," said Claire, "if the men didn't the women couldn't, could they?"

"But Holy Matrimony!" said Esther, bridling.

"Some of us are meant for good works," said Adelaide almost menacingly.

"Oh, yes," said Adela, because she had not said anything for a long time and thought she should make some contribution. "You give up a lot of your time to charity, I know."

"I am Lady Almoner in the Guild of Eleemosynary Churchwomen and President of the Daughters of Dorcas. I do what I can."

"I'm sure you do, dear," said Bertha heartily, with intent to soothe. Later she confided her doubts and fears to Mrs Gillam. Unfortunately, Mrs Gillam being deaf, she had to confide them in a loud voice.

"Dear Adelaide doesn't look as happy as she thinks she is."

"No," said the old lady in her bright, hard wisdom,

"she isn't. That's why she has taken to good works. Our home would be much more comfortable if she hadn't. She had as many opportunities of getting what she wanted as most girls. I don't know what it was. We will never know now, because if she ever knew herself, she has quite forgotten."

"Girls should marry," said Mrs Giles. "Their mammas should see to it."

Mrs Gillam regretted that Euphemia was dead and therefore not available for reprisal.

"Marrying and not marrying—how much it all matters," thought Adela. "Why can't poor females do as they like? There's never this fuss over bachelors—but of course gentlemen are different."

"Females," said Mrs Gillam, her dark eyes seeming to crackle and sparkle with contempt, "were created to bear children. You have only to look at your bodies to know that. Good works—stuff and nonsense!"

Mrs Giles thumped the floor with her stick in hearty agreement.

For a moment generation was stronger than temperament. This stark utterance fell with a crash into the gilded drawing-room, a bolt shot straight from the forthright thirties into the elegant and genteel fifties. Only Maud's portrait continued to assert that ladies were made of ribbons and laces and sweet pretty faces, nothing more. The blow shattered the conversation, it broke up into duets and trios. Adela told Claire about Lionel's delicate chest, and Sophia described a lively fracas with her mantua-maker who had tied her new gown up with hortensia ribbon instead of blonde. Adelaide talked about flannel to Esther.

"Galloway's in Pitt Street stock a special flannel for charities—I always go there. But I insist on grey flannel—red flannel is too exciting. Mrs Mathews, our dear rector's mother, is all for red flannel, she says it brings a little brightness into their lives. It caused quite a little rift in our Society. As President, I insisted. When once you begin exciting the poor you never know where it will end. Don't you agree with me?"

"I do indeed," said Esther earnestly.

Bertha talked to the old ladies and her comfortable laughter was like a down pillow in that somewhat angular gathering.

"These are wonderful times to live in, aren't they? With everybody making fortunes and spending them it almost makes me dizzy. People who never had more than a wheelbarrow are going about in their carriages now. It's just lovely, like being at a party all the time and never knowing what you're going to get off the Christmas-tree in a minute. I expect if my poor Thomas had been alive he'd have brought me home a diamond tiara one night. But there, he never looked like a rich man, and he was better at taking things out of his pocket than putting them in."

"There are some who are fortunate and some who are not," said Esther Bardon, "and some that have are careful to keep it to themselves," and she drew in her thin lips, pursing them inward, as it were, so that innumerable fine lines sprang into being in her too soft skin. Adela, who had not heard her words, recognized that expression. Every Thursday for years she had seen that expression as she listened to Esther's veiled complaints. "Of course," she would say, "Horatio is not a clever business man like William, but you would think honesty was something, wouldn't you?" and, "They do say blood is thicker than water, but I don't know! There are some people who don't help their relations on principle, they prefer strangers, people they've never heard of before," or again, "So I hear Mr Hyde has opened another store at Mount Alexander, and who's going to manage this one, I'd like to know?" And Adela could say nothing, least of all the truth—that the quartermaster never employed an incompetent. It was of these fine lines round Esther's mouth that Adela always thought when she woke on Thursday. They were the root of her "Thursday-feeling," that uncomfortable blend of distaste, apprehension, and pity with which Esther's visits inspired her. Nothing ever happened to prevent Esther from coming. It could rain or blow or scorch, but she came—at great personal inconvenience. There always

seemed more Thursdays in the year than any other days. This was Saturday—it was still a breathing-space off. Adela looked out into the garden where the shadows lengthened. Soon they would be going home.

VII

In the garden the party formed and re-formed itself, groups forming, breaking, merging in a sort of kaleidoscopic pattern. The quartermaster walked with old Gillam, and talked of prices and tonnage and trade. His heart expanded with love for the rival he had surpassed. He exuded geniality like a luminous paint.

"Who is the funny old buffer our papa-in-law has in tow?" Gresford asked Franklin.

"Don't you know?" asked Franklin. "That's old Hyde, Mrs Humphrey's father. He made a fortune on the gold-fields—on, not in, if you take me." He lowered his voice and mentioned a figure.

Gresford whistled. A man who could make money like that could afford any eccentricity. "Ah, yes!" he said. "Quite an original!"

"Absolutely," agreed Franklin, "He is the only ancestor the Hydes have."

Lovely Carolina Gresford, Evelina's sister-in-law, played with the children all the afternoon and seemed to enjoy their games much more than they did. She did not throw a single glance toward the men, but she hoped they found her beautiful and charmingly natural—and they did. She was seventeen, and like a portrait by Greuze, and on this likeness her whole character was built.

For the children the day was not quite a success. Even dinner with its silly old milk-puddings and brown bread had been disappointingly like the dinners in the nurseries at home. Their ages were too various for any round-game to be a success. Katie and Louisa had a tiring afternoon rushing out every few minutes to threaten and admonish the elder children or solace one of the babies.

James enjoyed himself. He was the eldest boy and the

natural leader of the party. He had suffered a moment's mortification when Adela confided Alice and Phœbe to his care. The whole sky had darkened for him—to have those dingy little girls thus publicly put in his charge was little short of disgrace. But it turned out that Lionel actually didn't mind the little girls, was indeed rather glad to take refuge with some one he was used to in that crowd of strangers, so James got off scot-free. At dinner he sat next to Laurel Franklin. She didn't say anything at first, but when she caught him looking at her she made a little quick face at him, wrinkling up her nose. He kept glancing at her to see if she were making faces. When they got to the rice-pudding she said suddenly:

"There are lovely cakes after this. I went to look, and saw them—pink sugary ones like they have inside. They give us all this first so that we can't eat enough cakes to make us sick. I'm not going to eat this."

"Then they'll say, 'If you can't eat your nice rice pudding you can't eat cakes.'"

Laurel laughed: with a quick movement she upset her glass of lemonade over her plate.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

Louisa rushed up with a napkin to mop up the mess.

"There, Miss Laurel, you clumsy girl, you've spoilt your pudding, and you'll get no more!"

It was strange that such a clever girl should be only Lionel's age. James wanted to upset his lemonade too, but every time he went to do it he felt so public that he decided it was easier to eat his pudding.

All the afternoon he kept running into Laurel. When they played chasings James picked her out to chase. She was very light and quick, dodging and doubling so that he could not catch her. He pursued her round and round the garden. He began to lose his breath, but she had enough left to go on grinning at him. The other children stopped playing because there was nobody to chase them, but still he panted and plunged after Laurel. Ferocity entered the chase, and when at last he overtook her he caught hold of her roughly and they fell together on a flower-bed. Her

face was not flushed as his was, but her heart was beating desperately in her shallow body—he felt it as he pulled her down.

"Come, now!" said a rich voice from above, "that's not behaving like a little gentleman. Ha! ha! fleeing from Apollo, eh?" Laurel made an excruciating and triumphant face from the region of her uncle Hunt's coat-tails.

She bore James no malice. When they played hide-and-seek she caught his hand. "I know a place," she whispered. She led him swiftly to the wildest part of the garden, tangled with fools'-ivy and convolvulus, and pulled him down behind a screen of honeysuckle that curtained the wall of an old tool-shed. She crouched panting by his side. James thought she was rather like a hare, with her bright, quick eyes and her small, swift, palpitating body. She wasn't so bad for a girl, he thought—she was funny and she could do things. It was such a good hiding-place that they were not found at all and had to come tamely out, to find the game all over.

The quartermaster called James to him as he walked up and down a garden path with Mr Gillam. He did not want him for anything in particular but drew him into step beside him, his arm affectionately round the boy's shoulder. It was like a public display of his heir. The two men went on talking.

Mr Gillam said, "My boy never cared for the business; it was a disappointment, but no good forcing him. He's done well for himself. Franklin's my heir as far as the business is concerned. Smart fellow, oh very! New-fangled notions but keen as mustard. Franklin and your William ought to divide the field between them in the next twenty years."

"We're not out of it yet—I feel like forty." With a quick powerful movement of his arm the quartermaster switched James round in front of them. "Twelve years old," he announced as if he defied old Gillam to produce a grandson to equal him. "Chest, eh! muscle, eh!"

"You'd better make it Hyde and Sons right away."

"Damned if I won't!" cried the quartermaster with a

great laugh. "There," he said, "run along. You can have your games a bit longer."

Fanny walked with Benjamin. She was drawn to him by curiosity and compassion. He seemed a poor, weak thing to be turned adrift in a family party, and she could not help wondering if he were still in love with Maud. He did not look like the vessel of an undying passion, but why else should he come all this way to be lonely and miserable among acquaintances with whom he could have nothing in common. Among the Gillams Benjamin seemed homely and comfortable and like one of themselves. After what he had suffered—after years in that forbidding mill-house, gaunt, ugly, and unvisited, looking always, Fanny felt, as she had seen it the day of Euphemia's funeral, shuttered and muted, with the door-knob of topaz glass gleaming in the late sunlight—he could not be like other men. Because of these things a mantle of horror and pity had fallen over Benjamin, and Fanny walked with him in the garden. Phœbe and Evelina, peeping through the bushes, cried, "Who is Fanny Hyde with?" and then, *diminuendo*, "Oh, it's only Mr Shirley."

"Benjamin," she said, walking on the narrow sea-shell path between the rows of cups-and-saucers and bushes of daphne and lauristinus, "don't you ever want to leave the mill? It must be very melancholy for you now."

He pressed his hand to his forehead, throwing back the lock of fair hair. He looked troubled, as if he suspected her of wanting to take something from him.

"I couldn't leave the mill—oh, no, Miss Fanny! I would miss it too much."

"Of course," she said. "It is practically your own property."

"It isn't that," he went on earnestly. "I've grown so used to the mill I'm hardly myself when I leave it. In the rush times when we could not grind the wheat fast enough to send to the goldfields, the mill worked twenty-four hours a day. When I woke in the night I could hear it. The sound was in my ears day and night for months, and when we went back to day-work only I missed it terribly. I

fretted for it, I did indeed, Miss Fanny. It was as if a pulse had stopped beating. I couldn't sleep. And the books too—the business has grown a great deal in the last ten years. The books have become very interesting." He paused and laughed nervously. What he was trying to say sounded bizarre in this sane and lovely garden, but it was true. He had escaped completely into his work from his tormented life at the mill-house, he had taken cover in book-keeping and milling until he had become part of them. As Daphnis (curious and inept simile), taking cover from Apollo in a tree, must remain a tree for ever, so Benjamin was captive in some strange between-world of mechanism and arithmetic. Fanny remembered tales she had heard of old men who perished with their homes rather than leave them, and of a boy, brought up in darkness on black bread, who could not bear the light and sickened on white bread. Glancing sharply at Benjamin, she found him as commonplace as ever—lank and pale—and it seemed strange that he of all men should have stumbled on this North-west Passage to content.

Their path was taking them out on to a miniature promontory that broke, six feet below, on to a couple of yards of sand lapped by the water of the harbour. On this little headland was built a rustic summer-house—a circular affair with wooden walls four feet high and a roof like a parasol, supported on wooden pillars and surmounted by a weather-cock. Wooden seats ran round the walls, and in the centre was an iron table of many scrolls. Once inside, you were not revolted by its architecture, and had a lovely view over the harbour, a wide bay, a headland still dark and thick with native bush, and a sheet of brilliant, placid water. The house was the width of the garden away and you could see how comely it was—a two-storied stone house with a splendid semicircular pillared portico, and long, cool, arched verandas—a colonial jewel for the next century. The garden flowed down from the house to the water, two lawns divided by a wide gravel path, the upper one broken by flower-beds—diamonds, Maltese crosses, Prince of Wales' feathers—in brilliant colour. To the left was a high hedge,

and beyond the hedge a kitchen-garden full of nice wholesome things like rhubarb and spinach for the children. To the right was a shrubbery, laid out in winding paths and lovers' walks. On the border-line between lawn and thicket the little promontory ran out into the water. Into the summer-house most of the adult guests had drifted. Only the quartermaster and old Gillam walked up and down their strip of path, hands clasped behind their backs, heads and shoulders leaning a little forward, beginning already to take on the similarity that age, like infancy, brings to all human beings. They were having the conversation of a decade and would have to be dragged apart by their womenfolk to go home. Caroline Gresford still fluttered with the children, but less gaily now that the audience was gone.

Fanny and Benjamin approached the summer-house, where Humphrey and his guests were gathered. Humphrey had worn well, he had kept his youth. Of the men gathered there, only he had any of the boy left in him. Fanny liked him better now than she used to. She had thought him insignificant, but she knew now that he was only quiet, that he had no affectations and no vanities, and that his kindness and courtesy went through to his heart. He had his father's nobility of feature without his strength.

Fanny was struck by the difference between Humphrey and his relatives. He seemed a different breed. There was Franklin, a robust man in the early forties, with florid Roman features, harsh, ruthless, and genial, a man with a mask of flesh over a spirit of steel; there was Gresford, the man of the world, a little supercilious, even a little cruel; and Hunt, the handsome young ex-officer, with some education but no brains, a pleasant companion and well enough so long as no strain was put upon him; and there was William, her brother, looking very rigid and almost ascetic. He looked as he was, scrupulous to a fault, punctilious to the point of being ungenerous. His strength was above his eyes, Franklin's in his jaw. William was the cooler man.

"He looks as if he were thinking something sour now," Fanny reflected. But what William was thinking was that

Mrs Gresford and Mrs Hunt were somewhat lacking in the modesty so appropriate in young matrons, laughing and talking all the afternoon with the men, and comparing them with his gentle and womanly Adela.

Fanny realized that she had more in common with these men than with Phœbe and Evelina, the rear elevation of whose *coiffures à la Valois* were before her now.

Humphrey would have found Fanny a seat, but she smiled and shook her head. She paused, one hand resting lightly on Benjamin's arm, the other on the summer-house wall, as if just pausing in the act of passing on; few of the company had noticed her arrival. Franklin held the floor, he believed himself a famous *raconteur* and was nearly always genial in public. He was telling some tale of the goldfields.

"...The watch interested the bushranger most. He opened the case and with some difficulty was able to read the inscription by moonlight. 'Ah, yes, Mr Moore,' he said, 'I thought so! I saw you now and again round and about Hyde's store in the old days. I don't suppose you'd remember a poor devil of a whaling-captain'—and he said it sorrowfully as if he was a much-injured man. Poor old Moore's blood did boil. I thought he'd have an apoplexy when he was telling me about it. There's no doubt it was that devil-may-care fellow Hildebrand who used to sail your father's boat the *Rosamund*, Hyde, and he got off with every penny poor Walter had, and made him a laughing-stock into the bargain."

There was laughter and in the midst Fanny heard Phœbe's famous titter.

"Isn't it odd!" she bubbled. "Oh, isn't it odd!" and then Fanny heard her own name and, "Well, that was what everybody said, and I know for a fact Walter paid her attentions—that the two of them should meet like that! I vow it's the oddest thing I've heard."

Fanny and Benjamin moved away. She felt no more than a snake would feel on hearing its old cast slough despitefully used.

Already the immortality of the afternoon was wearing thin. There was a faint smear of golden haze around the

horizon, and the arc of heaven was pale, the shadows on the lawn were lengthening every moment. Soon the party would be over. Maids were already bringing the refreshments that would be their stirrup-cup. Families drew together, carriages and boats were ready, brains were at work fashioning the parting compliments. It was almost evening, something chill and tristful had crept into the air, the twilight swallowed up the departing guests. Maud's party was over. It had been a wonderful party: it had closed an epoch, and had been a sort of clearing-house for the fifties. Thither had come the whole clan to take stock of itself, to count its riches or lick its sores. It had laid down the premises of the sixties. But there were still three more years in the fifties and three more months in 1857.

VIII

It was Christmas. And it was not quite like other Christmases although they did all the usual things, because, in a way, it was the last Christmas. Before next Christmas the family would have left the house in City Road, and James would have been sent to boarding-school. Adela thought it would be the last time her sons were children together, and the thought lent a bloom of melancholy to the happy days as if they were already beautiful and touching memories. She tried to make it a wonderful Christmas so that they would always remember it.

James too felt the shadow of approaching change. He was twelve, and in the new year he was going to school. These momentous facts set him apart. He was equally remote from the adults and from Lionel, who was still a baby. He was a little uncomfortable with himself, and a little suspicious of Christmas lest it trap him back into childishness.

Lionel was very happy, because this Christmas he had a real secret. In the disused potting-shed at the bottom of the garden he was making a wonderful present for his mamma. No one had seen it or even knew anything about it. The present in itself was wonderful, he admired it

intensely all the time he was at work upon it, but the essence of its choiceness lay in this, that no eyes but his had looked upon it. Thinking of it in bed at night he trembled with joy. His mamma had admired a screen and he had said, "I'll buy you a screen like that when I grow up," and she had kissed him and said, "Thank you, that would be nice!" Then one day he had found an old broken clothes-horse among a lot of lumber in the potting-shed, and the thoughts of the screen and of the clothes-horse had rushed together in his mind. No poet's inspiration could have been truer or have worn a finer aspect of divinity. He would not wait till he grew up, he would give Mamma her screen now. He washed the clothes-horse with his little watering-can, and he covered it with sheets of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, tacking them to the framework. He had to stand on a pile of wood to reach the top. It was very hard work, and when it was done the paper was not quite straight and the screen would no longer bend and unbend. He became accustomed to these defects and agreed with himself that they did not matter. The paper would be covered by pictures, and the screen was standing at a very pretty angle which could not be bettered. He begged some paste from Katie without telling her what he wanted it for, and borrowed the garden scissors. Pasting the pictures over the newspaper was really exciting. He took the coloured plates out of his annuals as a foundation, then all the scraps from his scrap-book and a few loose ones besides, then all his last year's Christmas-cards, and a few texts to fill up. But still there were spaces. He had to paint little pictures himself—all his pictures were alike because he could only paint one kind. It was a red house with black smoke coming out of the chimney, green trees, flower-beds in which each flower was faithfully drawn, and a sky full of birds.

James's lessons lasted longer than Lionel's, and this hour while James was still at work was the only time he was sure of not being disturbed. It was then that all the work was done. Lionel was so happy that he went about humming a little tuneless song. He was never tempted to tell

anyone. No one even suspected a secret, and saw nothing unusual in his manner. That he was good and happy was all that mattered. He was a quiet, self-contained child, with plump cheeks, very fair skin, and satisfied smiling lips. But his eyes were wide, deep, and like his mother's. He was susceptible to fear and chills. He was good-tempered, friendly, and quiet. He lived and let live. Only his mother he loved passionately. She was necessary to him. For her sake he could be jealous, passionate, and obstinate. He even obscurely realized that she loved him better than James and that that must be a secret between them.

This was a good Christmas. Every one had plenty of money to spend. There were parties and Christmas-trees and a pantomime. Maud gave a wonderful children's party and of course the boys went to it. The quartermaster took the whole family to the pantomime in style, engaging nearly the entire front row of the dress circle. His Homeric laughter led the house. Maud's children, who scarcely knew their grandpa, turned from the stage to gape at him, and little Alice Bardon, alarmed by so much noise and grandeur, to her eternal discredit, began to cry. It had been a wonderful night. Lionel had thought he could draw pictures of the pantomime for the screen, so clearly did they seem stamped on his mind; but as soon as he took his pencil they all faded away.

Adela took James and Lionel down into the town to buy Christmas presents for everybody—a pen-wiper for Papa, scent for Aunt Maud, an inkwell for Aunt Fanny, a ribbon for Elsie, a shawl for Katie, and something useful for their cousins Phœbe, Alice, and Mary, because they were not as fortunate as other little girls and boys—which James thought quite true if they were only to have useful presents like hair-ribbons and pairs of socks. After they had bought the presents they had milk and cakes at Compagnoni's—'Desdemonas' and 'Othellos' and rice-mugs. Little cakes then were nearly as big as big cakes are now. It was Lionel's ambition to eat three at a sitting, but he never could: Mamma always quietly took his plate away about the middle of the second, when he was beginning to get into

difficulties. It was a relief, because he could never have owned up that he'd had enough. When the meal was over they drove back home again, and Mamma said what good boys they had been. There was still a lot of the day left that had to be got through somehow.

The great treat, the thing they liked better even than the pantomime, was the trip into town at night with their Aunt Fanny to see the illuminations and buy their mamma's Christmas-box. They did not set out until it was almost dark—that was part of the ritual. It was so long after their tea-time that Adela gave them milk and biscuits in the drawing-room before they went. James could not keep still, and Lionel bubbled in his glass.

All three adventurers had made festive toilets for the great occasion; Lionel wore his lemon-coloured trousers, gathered round his waist and securely strapped under his patent-leather shoes, his mulberry-coloured zouave jacket, and a black peaked cap; James, a step higher, was arrayed in long check pants, blue jacket, and blue-and-white cap; and Fanny, to please them, had put on her mauve tarlatan with the fifteen flounces and the fluttering violet ribbons, a little flat hat like a plate, tilted over her eyes, mauve with violet ribbons, and her amethyst necklace. The brougham was at the door. The smart carriage-and-pair was another evidence of the growing prosperity at the Laburnums. William had given it to Adela. It was English-built, of an incredible dark glossiness, and had Adela's initials enamelled on the panels of the door. It held comfortably, facing the horses, one lady in a crinoline and two small boys, and at need another lady in a crinoline could sit with her back to the horses. It was quite a large carriage. The pair of horses were so well matched that only the children could tell Brownie from Gipsy. The stables were quite crowded in these fat days. Star was grown old and had been replaced in use but not in affection by another riding horse. William had given Star to James. "It is better," he had said, "for him to learn to ride on an old friend than on a pony we know nothing about." Star had grown very tolerant and very quiet. Lionel wanted to ride too, but

when Adela compared his very short legs with Star's very long ones she shook her head and said that some day she would ask Papa to buy him a dear little Shetland pony.

It was not quite night. The summer twilight was purple and the lights glowed a rich yellow. You thought you could see things, but even while you were looking at them the most solid objects melted into nothing. The brougham turned the corner into the Parramatta Road and rolled down the hill toward the city, whose lights already glowed in the sky. There was enchantment in the air. The carriage lamps gathered strength. The children's faces at the windows looked white and mysterious. Between them frothed and billowed the pale mass of Fanny's dress.

The carriage was left at a livery stable, and the trio mingled on foot with the crowds in the street. The boys so rarely went out at night that everything appeared different. This seemed a strange city out of a fairy-tale. Years after when they looked back to the Christmases of their childhood they found they had all run together into one lump, and that the beauty and mystery of Christmas was concentrated in two hours of wandering in Sydney by night. There was enchantment in the memory, but never again in the short life and the long life that were allotted to them did James and Lionel touch the reality of that enchantment when once they had lost it.

The streets were crowded. The fifties were rich, ornate years. There was plenty of money, plenty of work, plenty of hope. Life went with a fine flourish. The days were spacious, and they had need to be to hold the crinolines and the mustachios and the *bric-à-brac* that crowded them. There was plenty of colour and stir and noise in the streets, red coats of soldiers, and the blues, maroons, and silvers of the urban bucks. The embroidered waistcoats and flowing ties of the men were scarcely less brilliant and diverse than the organdies, tarlatans, and muslins of the flounced and ruched crinolines that glided beside them. The air in the narrow streets was heavy with the smell of humanity, food, and dust; they resounded with the clamour of shopkeepers crying their wares and children blowing their

Christmas trumpets, upon a background of laughter, conversation, and footsteps. In its upper reaches sound merged into vision, and, on the edge of the subconscious, smell merged into sound. The senses were perfectly blended, and the blend was rich.

James was for ever straining on ahead, hardly waiting to look at one thing in the fear of missing another, but Lionel fell in love with each shop window and had to be forcibly dragged away from it. There were windows full of toys so that it seemed as if nobody could have bought anything at all yet, and windows dabbed over with cotton wool to represent a snowstorm, and glittering within with the tinsel and blue lights of a spurious Northern winter; there were Christmas-trees covered with tinsel stars and coloured balls, surmounted by bland German angels. There were barrows in dark side-streets lit by flares, and men on the pavement selling penny toys. There was a big crowd round the shop that Cousin Esther said sold Popish idols, and when the boys had wormed their way in to see what sinister and soul-snatching sight was there, they found the Babe in the Manger, the kneeling shepherds, and Mary in a blue cloak smiling her placid, unforeseeing, waxen smile.

The boys lusted after strange sweetmeats and drank gaseous chemical liquids at a marble-topped table. James could not imagine a different sort of Christmas—this *was* Christmas—and thought it rather strange that he should be growing up. Lionel simply looked about him. Then they wandered out again into the streets. Pressing his face against the window of a poulterer's shop, Lionel saw a little sucking-pig lying within a big wreath of white sausages, with a sprig of parsley in its mouth. It was a pale, very young pig, lying there with its eyes shut and a look on its face that was sad and innocent. Lionel's eyes filled with tears, but the ruddy cheerful hams and the comic, fat German sausages cheered him a little, and the fine Rabelaisian pork-pies turned his mind to more earthly concerns.

Presently they came to the shop where they meant to buy their mamma's Christmas present. They looked at needlecases, and quill pens dyed all the colours of the rain-

bow, and little pictures in plush frames, and illuminated texts, but nothing was exactly right until their eyes simultaneously lit upon a most intriguing object lying upon the counter, and an inner voice told each of them that this was the very thing their mamma had been pining for all her life. Its mundane use was as a paperweight, and it was of clear glass in the shape of a large egg, standing on a little marble square. Inside the egg, though how she got there neither could imagine, was a little lady in a scarlet pelisse, walking in the snow. When you shook the egg the snow fluttered about her like a real snowstorm. Their hands met on this delightful object. There was a deadlock.

"Why not give it to her between you?" Fanny suggested, at her wits' end. The idea was abhorrent to each of them. Then Lionel suddenly withdrew his hand and his claims.

"You can have it," he said magnanimously, "I've got another present for Mamma—a big surprise."

"What is it?"

"I won't tell you." Lionel smiled his little satisfied smile, pushing out his lips.

James stood fingering the warm contents of his money-box. Lionel was a silly baby, and it was not likely that his surprise was very wonderful, but nevertheless James's heart was suddenly filled with jealous anger and his pleasure in the paperweight quite gone.

"Come, James," said Fanny, "you are keeping everybody waiting."

The egg was purchased and Lionel bought a thimble in blue enamel.

"You might be a little more gracious, James," said Fanny.

Under cover of the crowd he pinched Lionel's leg. "Tell me what it is," he hissed in his ear. But Lionel merely removed himself out of reach of further pinches and shook his head emphatically. It was a novel experience to have his brother at a disadvantage, and Lionel had no intention of surrendering.

"I have a secret, too. I'll tell you if you'll tell me yours."

Lionel went on tactlessly smiling and shaking his head. Fanny was aware of certain seethings and recognized that

some of the effervescence had gone out of her charges. She thought they must be tired, and suggested a return to the carriage although it was only a quarter to ten and custom allowed them till ten.

Going home, Lionel fell asleep and Fanny put her arm round him—James sat hunched up in his corner with his chin sunk on his breast silently defying her to put her arm round him. Only last Christmas he had had to hold up his eyelids with his fingers to keep himself awake. He felt very, very much older than last year. He was miserable. A lump rose in his throat to think how sad it was that he should be miserable at Christmas. He didn't know why he was unhappy. It had come upon him from outside like a thick black cloud, and it had intensified all the feelings of unrest that had been lurking in his heart for weeks. Behind the knowledge that he was going to school and its half-painful excitement was the thought that he would be leaving the field open to Lionel. Even now young Lionel had stolen a march on him with his wonderful silly secret. When he came home from school for the holidays he would find Mamma and Lionel so thick that there would be no place left for him. The thought had come out into the open now and had eclipsed Christmas and school and even the pride of his own astounding maturity. James thought the first long tormented thoughts of his adolescence, jogging home from the greatest treat of the year. In the glow of a passing lamp he caught a glimpse of Lionel asleep. He would sleep! The sight maddened him. Lionel was just the pretty girlish little boy Mamma would like.

"For pity's sake keep your feet still, James. My poor gown!" cried Fanny.

The next morning the cloud still rested on James, and he felt prickly and defensive. Mamma wanted to know what he'd had to eat last night, as if a fellow were all stomach. Lionel seized the occasion to be conspicuously cheerful. There were no lessons. Mr Monk came round for some books and they said good-bye to him for the last time. But they could not feel that it was the last time, though he made them a half-jocular, half-serious valediction. The

incident was curiously insignificant. Mr Monk was like a cotton-reel that had been wound up and put away, that was all. After the winding-up of Mr Monk there seemed nothing else to do. The day after to-morrow would be Christmas Day. It was no good doing any of the old things —they would so soon be all swept away.

As he wandered about in the garden in this gloomy mood, James caught a glimpse of Lionel disappearing in the direction of the old potting-shed. There was something stealthy in the younger boy's movements that betrayed his errand. James knew as if by inspiration that the great secret was in the shed. The thought was like flame to the tinder of his mood. Without evaluating his impulse he raced after Lionel and reached the shed only a minute behind him. Lionel had been cunning in his simplicity. Nobody ever went near the old shed. He only went there himself in the first place because it looked lonely, and now he trusted to it for concealment simply by letting it alone. It was the sort of shed no one would suspect. It looked dirty, and it was. It gave the impression of spiders, and not of Christmas presents. When James arrived Lionel was kneeling unsuspectingly in his lair, endeavouring to stick down the curling edge of a Christmas card with spittle. The darkening of the doorway roused him. For a moment he just looked at James, then he rose slowly to his feet, automatically brushing the dust off his knees.

"So that's it!" cried James. "So that's your great surprise! It's only a silly old clothes-horse "—and he began to laugh loudly, insultingly.

Without a word, head down, his fair skin flushing darkly, Lionel rushed at James and caught him literally in the middle of his laughter. Winded and surprised, James fell back and tried to clutch the windmill arms that whirled about him.

"I say!" he gasped. "Oh, I say! I didn't mean——"

For a moment he pinioned Lionel, felt his body trembling with rage and chagrin, and heard his passionate, sobbing breaths. Then Lionel broke free and rushed away from him through the long grass and over garden-beds. James followed, alarmed.

Lionel tripped over a basket of roses standing on the path, and sprawled on the gravel. Adela, who had just cut the roses, ran to pick up her son and her flowers.

"Darling, are you hurt? What ever is it? You're not crying like this for a silly little fall, are you?"

James stood some distance off, sulky and utterly ashamed.

"What is it? Tell Mamma. Are you hurt?"

"No, Mamma."

"Did something frighten you?"

"No, Mamma."

"James, come here.

He approached grudgingly, with hanging head.

"What has happened?"

"I don't know."

The only thing he could do for Lionel now was to lie about it, but the lie lacked finish. It was the poorest possible lie.

Adela looked at him over the head of the sobbing child in her arms. She saw his sullen, guilty face and she felt the terrible distress quivering in the slight body she held—the body still so young and so intimately hers. For a moment James was not her son, he was simply some one who had hurt Lionel. She swept him with a dark, inimical look, and drew Lionel away to the safety of a world where James did not exist.

James stood stock-still in the garden-path. A spring, that he had not known was there, wound tighter and tighter in his chest with a pain that was black and bitter.

In that swift hostile glance something had been revealed to him, he did not know what—only his chest knew where the pain was. Oddly enough it was something that he had always known and feared. It was as if he had been actually overtaken by a nightmare—that terrible moment that we always just miss in our dreams. For just a moment the sun was black and it was like living in the negative of a photograph.

The incident died down. James bit down his pride. He said:

"I'm sorry, and I think your screen's beautiful."

Lionel looked at him with Mamma's eyes.

"It was my secret," he said. "I don't think it's very nice myself now."

James couldn't tell from that whether he forgave him or not, but Lionel let him help to carry the screen to the house on Christmas Eve, so he supposed he did. James could forgive anyone who injured him—he liked doing it. It was much, much harder to forgive them the injuries he had inflicted on them.

Mamma liked the paperweight. James thrust it into her hand mumbling something instead of making the pretty speech he had learned. She liked the thimble too, and the pearls Papa gave her, but she liked the screen so much she nearly wept. Lionel could not believe she liked it. He kept saying:

"But, Mamma, do you really, truly like it? Is it nice enough, Mamma?" And every time she said, "It is beautiful, darling, it's just what I wanted. I like it better than anything, because you made it yourself."

She had it taken up to her bedroom and stood it in front of the fireplace. James wished the house could be burnt down so that he wouldn't have to go on seeing it.

Lionel heard Mamma say to Papa, "But it would break his little heart," and presently when Papa had gone he crept into her room.

"If you don't want the screen you needn't keep it. I won't mind," he said.

"Of course I want it, goose."

"The texts are curling up," he pointed out, "and it's not straight, and it won't fold up."

"It's lovely—and you've given me all your scraps and all your pictures, you generous little thing. And the dear little pictures you painted yourself——"

"Oh," he said, brightening, "I was only just thinking."

Fanny saw that James's Christmas was spoilt. She knew, almost as if it were her own distress, how hard he found it to forgive Lionel for having sustained a wrong at his hands. She was a little nervous too, as she thought he might do any wild thing to reinstate himself in his own respect. But

she hesitated when it came to intruding on his intimate life.

One evening, when the boys were going to bed, Adela took Lionel away into her room and kept him there for what James thought was a very long time. He wondered jealously what they were doing. Fanny came in and sat on his bed.

"You know that you are going to boarding-school next year, James," she began abruptly. No one had told him, but he knew.

"There will be a great many other boys there, and you will have to stand on your own feet. Most of the boys will be older and stronger and cleverer than you, and some will be weaker. You'll have to learn to live with both kinds, James —not to envy the stronger or scorn the weaker. It is a matter of generosity. A man who is not generous is not a decent man, James, he's not worth his salt. Will you remember that?"

James was very uncomfortable, he squirmed down in his bed till only his ruffled hair and sombre eyes were visible above the bed-clothes. General principles break no bones, but he felt there was going to be some personal and immediate application, and there was.

"Lionel," she began again, "is two years younger than you, and I am afraid we have kept him a baby because he is not strong. He is only a child. Don't you think you can afford to be generous to him? If you can't live at peace with your own brother how will you get on with all those strange boys? You are not a child any longer. What you do and think now matters. If you drift into enmity with your brother now it may poison both your lives. This is the last Christmas you will be children together and we wanted it to be very happy. Your mamma has done everything she could to make it happy, but it really rested with you. Good night, James."

She stooped and kissed him—a light kiss with cool, firm lips, so different from Adela's long, soft kisses—and left him swiftly. They both had a mingled feeling of shame and relief. Fanny expected no immediate results and

demanded no answer or promise. Her words worked in his pride and came near to undermining his obstinate heart.

He lay awake for what seemed to him a very long time. He had not known the night could be so long. He was not an imaginative child, but he had come to a crisis in his life, and this was no ordinary night. The rain beat upon the nursery windows in savage gusts, and a great wind went ravening past the house as if it rushed upon some terrible deed. It was a night to make the whole fabric of our life seem frail. James lay and listened to the mounting storm. He felt as if even his own feet were far away and unreal, as if a cold hand were pressing him down upon his bed so that he was stifled. For the first time he was aware of the dark companion. His passions and distresses of the last fortnight were magnified and distorted. He himself was empty of all emotion but fear, but the things that he had felt were close beside him, detached from him, living on in the world and growing of themselves every moment more horrific. But he was bound to them and responsible for them still. His quarrel with Lionel had become a fratricidal passion, a thing as huge and vengeful as the wind. He prayed that the wind might take him and carry him away anywhere so long as it were far from the thoughts with which he had filled the nursery.

He must have slept, for he had the sensation of waking to something worse. The storm had reached its crisis. There was a sound like guns. Adela came into the nursery with a shawl thrown over her long white nightgown, and her hair hanging in plaits on either side of her face. The light of the candle she shaded with her hand illuminated her face.

"Are you afraid of the storm, James?"

"No, Mamma."

She went over to Lionel, but he was sleeping through it.

"Are you sure you don't mind it, James?"

"Yes, Mamma. Don't go."

She set the candle down on the bureau and sat upon his bed, holding him close to her all bunched up in the bedclothes.

"You need not have been afraid to tell Mamma you were frightened, darling. I am frightened of this storm."

"But you left Papa and came in here."

"Yes, to my little boys."

She rubbed her cheek against his hair. Together they listened to the wind and the rain in the pale wash of candlelight. They were together at last, closer than they had ever been. The night and the candle and Mamma's hair hanging down made everything different. He wasn't proud, he didn't want to keep her out any more. He didn't mind how long the storm lasted. When the big crashes came he felt her tremble and he loved her so much it was like something squeezing his heart. The storm died down, like the ebbing of pain. James fell asleep with his head on Adela's shoulder. At last when it was quiet outside she laid him down without waking him, and stole away.

It was the night of the 30th of December, 1857, and on that night the *Dunbar* was driven by the storm upon the cliffs at the Gap, and every soul on board, save one, perished in the sea. No gun could be heard or rocket seen on such a night, and until the morning showed the wreckage strewn about the base of the cliffs no one in the thriving and populous city knew that the wind had fulfilled its purpose at their very doors.

BOOK III

THE HILL

CHAPTER X

SUBSTANCE

THE decision to move from the City Road to a residence more suited to the rising family fortunes had been inevitable for some time. Only the quartermaster's continued absence had postponed it so long. Not even William cared to take the final step until his father had returned. This move was William's dearest project. He was determined that now at last the house of Hyde should establish itself in an exclusive and fashionable neighbourhood, and prepare to take the place in the elegant society of the colony to which its fortunes entitled it. The Laburnums was well enough in its way, commodious and genteel, but it looked like the home of a prosperous middle-class merchant, and William was bent on achieving something more. The new home was to be a fitting shrine for the ideal he had created of a stately and dignified English home, preserving the best traditions of English family life, and holding by prescriptive right an unassailable position in the social scheme.

William had given a lot of careful thought to the best method of broaching the subject to the quartermaster, and he was surprised and not a little aggrieved when the responsibility and credit for the project were snatched from him one night at dinner, when the quartermaster expansively cried:

"We must be thinking of where we are going to make our new home, girls. This is not nearly good enough for us now, is it, William?"

Such is the contrariety of human nature that William, ashamed perhaps to have his own feelings so crudely and indelicately expressed, replied ungraciously enough:

"It has been good enough for us for many years now, Papa, and I do not know that we have changed."

"Of course we've changed," said his father. "You can't make money like we've made it and not change."

The quartermaster was as exuberant as ever, and was heartily and unashamedly proud of his success, of the fortune he had accumulated, and of the figure Hyde and Son was cutting now in the business world. He wanted to do something, to have something, to show his success in concrete and tangible form both to himself and to the world. The business was expanding steadily, almost of its own accord. There was no opening there for any new spectacular undertaking that would blazon the triumphs of Hyde and Son to the admiring world. He must make such a gesture in his family life. A fine new house, thought the quartermaster, some good lavish entertainments, would hit the mark. He had outdistanced old Gillam in the field of business, for all the start he'd had. He'd do it now in the social game too. This was another heritage they could create for James the second.

The quartermaster saw no reason to be ashamed of his desire for a little display, and his open confession, or rather boast, of this ambition was very trying to William, whose great desire was to achieve social position and fashionable elegance while creating even among themselves the illusion that things had never been otherwise with them. Yet how could he adopt this accustomed attitude while his father openly talked of the splash they were going to make?

But his annoyance wore off. The project was too close to his heart for its accomplishment to be marred by trivialities. He flung himself energetically into the interminable discussions which raged round the proposed site of the new home.

Sydney had expanded so much during the fifties that many new suburbs had grown up, and it was difficult to choose between their rival claims. Maud, admitted to the discussion, strongly urged the claims of Balmain.

"It would be too delightful to have you so close, instead of having to take a whole day to pay you a call—and the children would be such company for Lionel. He will be very lonely when James goes to school. Oh, I think it is a perfect plan!" cried Maud.

But no one else was very enthusiastic. Neither the quartermaster nor Fanny cared greatly for the Gillams, and Balmain sometimes seemed to them a veritable nest of Gillams.

"It would look as if we were copying them," said the quartermaster. "We want to find something new."

Maud's nearness was an attraction, but Maud would not be there permanently. Elsternwick was more favourably considered. It was about two miles farther out along the Parramatta road, and some fine residences had recently been erected there. It combined the advantage of rural surroundings with that of comparatively easy access to the business. The quartermaster with Adela and Lionel, in the smart carriage with its pair of chestnut horses, drove out along the broad road one sunny day to inspect a house that had recently been built for sale. It stood on high ground in several acres of land, but the quartermaster was not satisfied that it was grand enough. While Adela dutifully went through the rooms, counting cupboards and estimating accommodation, and Lionel stood watching the men at work on the surrounding wall, the quartermaster talked with the builder. When Adela returned she found him jubilant.

"I think I've found just what we want, my dear. That builder fellow has been at work at a place up the Parramatta river, Hunter's Hill, and he's been telling me of four or five fine houses built by some rich foreigners, Italians, I think."

"Oh, yes," said Adela. "Mrs Franklin was telling us about them some time ago. Two brothers named Joubert, and a count—I can never think of his name——"

"Those are the ones, my dear. It seems they took up a lot of land at Hunter's Hill and built their own homes, brought out special workmen from Italy and special tiles

and glass from the Paris Exhibition and no end of other fallals like that. Then they've built some more houses to sell. According to that fellow I was talking to they are fine places. We'll go and see them."

The quartermaster unfolded his new idea to William, who found it good. Hunter's Hill was a locality fast becoming one of the most fashionable and select in the neighbourhood of Sydney. Lying on the high, narrow spit of land between the Parramatta and the Lane Cove rivers, its history went back almost to the beginning of Sydney's history. The name Hunter's Hill was first given to a farm bought as early as 1794 by a Mr Thomas Muir, one of the famous band of convicts known as the Scottish Martyrs. Muir's offence, for which he was transported for fourteen years, was that he had advocated Parliamentary reform and had recommended his hearers to read the works of the notorious infidel Thomas Paine. The French Revolution had so terrified the British Government that in those days even a mild suggestion of reform was regarded as rank sedition, and Muir had had to pay dearly for his liberal views. But he was not treated harshly in New South Wales. Major Grose had allowed him to build his own hut on the Tank Stream and also to buy land on the northern side of the Lane Cove river. He named his farm Hunter's Hill in affectionate remembrance of his father's Scottish home, and lived a quiet and very retired life there for two years. Early in 1796 he escaped aboard the American brig *Otter*, which landed him at Nootha Sound in Alaska. Hunter's Hill farm was, of course, confiscated, and the land advertised for sale. Later the name wandered indefinitely, as some place-names do, over all the adjoining land, until finally it found its permanent home in the lovely, thickly wooded crest of hill-land lying between the rivers.

In the days of free grants this peninsula had early been given out in blocks to free settlers and emancipists, and its history had been coloured by many picturesque features. A large portion of the southern shore facing the Parramatta had been especially reserved for whalers and sealers, though not much of this had been taken up. The proximity of

Cockatoo Island and its own quiet seclusion had caused many escaped convicts to seek concealment and escape there, and there were many alarms and excursions among the settlers on this score.

One of the most colourful incidents in its history was provided by the picturesque story of the Quaker murderer Tawell, who made his home there. This strange man had made quite a stir in Sydney in the thirties. Arrested for forgery, he had been saved from the gallows only by the Quaker beliefs of his employers, through whose clemency he had instead been sentenced to transportation. He gained his freedom under Macquarie, and earned a respectable living with his chemist's shop until he amassed considerable wealth by cornering the market in whalebone and speculating in oil. He caused a nine days' wonder in Sydney through his spectacular declaration of temperance beliefs, pouring some hundreds of gallons of rum and Geneva gin into the harbour waters in the presence of a full gathering of the local temperance society. At last, weary of well-doing, he returned to England and once more achieved notoriety by a murder of peculiar unpleasantness. He might have escaped, but, spectacular to the last, he was captured through the instrumentality of the electric telegraph, then an amazing novelty—the first criminal to be tracked by that means. His estate at Hunter's Hill was of course forfeited, and during the forties the locality settled down to a more peaceful and uneventful life, attracting more and more of the well-to-do professional people of Sydney. The Hill received its last hall-mark of social superiority when the brothers Joubert and Count Gabriel de Milliau bought up considerable estates and settled there. They determined to make their Australian homes as beautiful and as Italian as they could. They brought specially skilled and selected workmen from Italy to build them, and specially chosen materials from Rome and Paris for their adornment. Their own homes complete, they built others for sale. It was their enterprise which made the Hill, always a select community, one of the most fashionable about Sydney.

Such was the history of the locality where the quarter-

master proposed to settle the house of Hyde. It seemed ideal—rather out-of-the-way, perhaps, but the little paddle-steamers, the *Emu*, *Pelican*, and *Black Swan*, carried passengers and mail regularly, though not very frequently, up and down the Parramatta; there were also many boatmen plying canoes and other small craft for hire, and though there were difficulties, the quartermaster and William thought they could be overcome until the bridges were built. There was to be a long and chequered road to travel before these bridges were built, but when the Hydes made their inquiries they were optimistically believed to be an event of the near future.

The quartermaster was never one to let the opportunity slip, and he saw here a fine chance to secure just the home he wanted. He made immediate inquiries, and early one Monday morning the whole family set out to inspect. They were all very excited, though only the quartermaster openly showed his feelings. He talked to James, pointing out the different localities as they passed. The excitement and bustle made Lionel a little sick, and this distracted Adela from the pleasure of the day. Fanny and William were silent. The day was sparkling, crisp, and clear, and the water twinkled happily as the little steamer churned its way up the river. Their party nearly filled the little vessel, for they had planned a picnic lunch, and Katie, Elsie, and the coachman, Bert, came too, laden with rugs and hampers. They came to the jetty, and with difficulty the ladies were handed out, their crinolines swaying with the effort. The road rose steeply before them, up the hill. Their excursion seemed to take on the air of a pilgrimage. The boys ran on before, diving into the trees that bordered the road, doubling on their tracks with the extravagant energy of dogs, while their elders toiled more slowly up the heights. On the summit they turned to the right, and came almost at once upon their destination.

The house was of stone, and three stories high. It had solidity and suavity and situation. Its outline was solid and sufficiently like the store to give the quartermaster confidence. It was built in the form of a square, with a wing flung out

at right-angles to the eastern side of the house. A tiled veranda supported on a colonnade of stone pillars ran across the front of the first story, and but for this the walls were unbroken save for the long, narrow windows, set flush with the stone and armed with wooden shutters. The austerity of the general outline was tempered by the smooth, rounded arches over the windows and doors, the nobility of the chimney stacks, and the bland, shallow steps that bowed the visitor up to the massive oak front-door with its manorial knocker of bronze. Above the door, set too high for ostentation, was the solitary embellishment, a shield cut in stone, flanked by two stone spheres. The circular grass-plot in the sweep of the drive held its urn, like a calyx in stone; and, below, the beautiful Italianate balustrade separated the upper garden from the lower garden. As yet it only separated one wilderness from another, but so great was its power of suggestion that the eye already imagined the barrage of trees and formal gardens and lawns that it would some day overlook.

The house was built almost at the summit of the hill that formed the peninsula between the two rivers. The road that climbed up from the water and, turning at the crest of the hill, plunged down on the left to the water again, held it almost in its angle. The house had turned away its face, though it had, as a sop to hospitality, set its front-door toward the road. The balcony and the principal windows looked down over the sloping garden to the Lane Cove. The house was fixed in a long dream, with its face to the river. From the drive you could see nothing but the garden sloping to the balustrade and falling from the balustrade into dark thickets that hid the water. From the veranda you could see water glittering beyond, like a ring of steel or sapphire about the enchanted garden. From the upper windows you could see across the river to the wooded headland of Longueville, to the east Ball's Head, and the junction of the rivers, and to the south, over the narrowed and sunken peninsula, the city itself.

After the City Road the Hill was very quiet, and the house was more than quiet—it had a quality of remoteness that

nothing could destroy. It had not entered men's minds to build houses to suit the landscape. This house had as little as any house could have in common with the ragged aromatic Australian bush that had been driven back to make room for it. It was as much the secret work of man as the bush was the secret work of nature. It was a house in the long tradition of houses built by rule and cult, almost by ritual. If the Italian builders had raised it at Timbuctoo or the South Pole it would have been the same house. It made no concessions at all, and so it had mysteriously a quality of age and remoteness before the builder's materials were cleared away. It was never like a new house. If you lost for a moment its quality of remoteness in the abundant life that came to fill it, you always found it again as you turned the corner of the house and came upon that solitary wing thrown out from the solid block of the main building, enclosing on two sides a small, flagged yard. Here it was always quiet; the austere walls, the rounded arches, the high, narrow windows, the bare stones—only these, but the sounds of the world took on a poignant unreality, the wind died, the sunlight fell more thickly. Descending from the eastern wall, a flight of stone steps set deep in the earth led you down to the lower drive, which ended in the coach-house, built of the same mellow stone with the same square solidity softened by the same rounded arches.

The group of people, held together for a moment of time by the grave beauty of the house, broke apart almost at once. James and Lionel, pursued by warning cries from Katie, plunged into the thickets below; no more fascinating playground had ever yet been offered them. Their cries floated up at intervals, distinct yet muted by the distance and the thick foliage of the trees. The others, as they walked through the wide halls or lingered in the high, beautifully proportioned rooms, had each a secret foretaste of what this home would be. The quartermaster, looking down the vista of reception-rooms, saw them crowded with his friends, saw himself at the head of a noble dining-table dispensing lavish hospitality, saw his son and his son's son here after him, his house firmly founded. William, as he paced from room to

room, measuring, estimating, was busy planning how the house should be furnished. Its commanding position, its air of exclusive grace and strength appealed to him, but its noble lines and beautiful austerity cried out in vain for an equal simplicity and austerity in its furnishing. To him, the highest elegance was and always would be the ornate and overcrowded furnishings in which the forties, and even more the fifties, found the highest expression of domestic art. The debased rococo style, with its flamboyant curves and incongruous ornamentation carved in wood or in the fashionable stucco of the day, was then almost at its worst in all countries, and in England it was seen in its full perfection of flowers and cupids, shells and rock-work adorning the mirrors, consoles, and chiffoniers. William determined that this home should be a perfect embodiment of the Victorian ideal of luxurious elegance. The colonial furniture-shops could certainly not be trusted to have what was desirable. It would have, nearly all of it, to be imported; and William's mind was already at work furnishing the dining-room with massive, uncomfortable chairs, ugly survivals of an earlier taste for reproductions of the Greek style, a monumental pedestal-sideboard with large mirrors set in scrolled gilt frames, a chiffonier with scroll supports, and all the other ornamental and uninviting appurtenances of a gentleman's home.

Fanny, standing by the long narrow windows of a room in the east wing, looked out over the sloping wilderness of grass and trees, across the placid water, darkened now in the shadow of a passing cloud, and felt at peace. Gone now were the bitter, unavailing strivings that had tormented her years ago, gone too the jealousy that had withdrawn her from any share in Adela's home and had inspired her eager competence when necessity drove it back to her care. She could afford to laugh now at her own absurdity. This was Adela's home, of course, but only because she was one of them. It belonged to them all, they all had equal part in the house of Hyde. There would be no need for her now to anger William by insisting on bringing to this room, which she had already chosen as hers, the narrow white bed and

the flounced dressing-table with its oval glass that she had clung to so desperately in her unhappiness when they had left Windmill Street. She needed nothing now to bind her to the old life in Windmill Street, for she was part of it. Her own real life lay there, but this would be a lovely sanctuary, a fitting counterpart, in their domestic life, of the great and growing business life in Windmill Street. Fanny looked down again on the garden, and planned the beauties of English firs and pines, plane-trees, and camphor-laurels that would replace the tangled growth of shrubs that now encumbered the lower garden. She turned to rejoin Adela.

Adela was not immediately to be found. She had kept pace dutifully with William at first as he systematically examined each room, but she had slipped away at last and sought refuge in the room on the top floor that was to be the boys' schoolroom—or rather Lionel's alone, for James, poor James, was to be torn from the family circle as soon as the next school term opened. She stood here a little while before she too was drawn to the windows by the still beauty of their prospect. She felt a little appalled that she —Adela Gage—was to be the mistress of this home. She was an old married woman now, she told herself, with two great sons to remind her of her age and dignity whenever she might chance to feel young and foolish and a girl again. But this house made her feel incredibly young and inexperienced, and an intruder on its predestined solitude. Was it possible, she wondered suddenly, that the Hydes could not feel that, too, could really feel, as they seemed to do, that it was excellently suited to them and to their purposes? For a moment they seemed as remote and alien to her as they had done in the first year of her marriage, and she as strange and lonely, only now she no longer stood alone against them, she had Lionel. The feeling passed, the boys' voices called her back to reality and the present, and when Fanny found her she was laughing at their antics and comical cries. Fanny suggested lunch, and the two ladies walked down the broad stately staircase to collect their party.

II

The Hydes had to content themselves to wait for some months before they could move from City Road to Hunter's Hill, for William's design of sending to England for the appropriate furniture was carried into immediate effect. Every one felt that this was right and desirable, though the quartermaster once voiced an uneasy suspicion that they ought to give the local men their chance. But the orders had gone home, and many months had to pass before the new home could be completed. So it was that the Laburnums had seen the closing months of 1857, had witnessed the Christmas festivities and the great storm in which that year had closed. But they were all impatient for the move to come, and it was well that James's departure for boarding-school provided excitement to relieve the tedium of waiting.

The difficult problem of the boy's education had been discussed for many months. It was imperative that he should be sent to school, for it was becoming increasingly evident that Mr Monk's methods were not the most suitable for James at any rate. Moreover, both the quartermaster and William were firm believers in the discipline and training in the give-and-take of life that boys' schools provided, and it was in Adela's family tradition that the boys of the family must go to a public school. She wondered if she would have been so complaisant had Lionel been in question, but Lionel was still very delicate and there would be no question of boarding-school for him for many a long day.

It is possible that James would have gone as a day scholar to the Sydney College if they had remained at the City Road, but the move to Hunter's Hill made a boarding-school imperative. The only one that recommended itself was the King's School at Parramatta. The institution of this college had been recommended to Governor Darling nearly thirty years before by a Committee of the Trustees of the Clergy and School Lands. It had been prosperous and well considered from the first. Its first headmaster,

the Rev. Robert Forrest, a scholar, athlete, and gentleman, had created an excellent tone in the school, and more and more of the well-to-do colonists were proud to send their boys there. It had suffered some vicissitudes, but in 1848 Forrest, whose health had forced him to resign, had resumed the headmastership and restored the popularity and success of the school. At the present time the Rev. F. Armitage was headmaster, and the prestige of the school stood high. Numbers were rapidly increasing and considerable additions were being made to accommodate them. William and the quartermaster were more than satisfied to place James there.

James viewed the forthcoming revolution in his life with mingled feelings. He was a robust and manly lad, and he looked forward with eagerness to the company of other boys of his own age. His self-importance waxed greater, and he found Lionel more irritating than ever in his imperviousness and lack of appreciation. But as the time grew nearer fear overtook him, and on his last night at home panic was not far off. But he was determined not to show it. Adela had prepared a special tea for James with all his favourite dishes, and she was hurt and disappointed that he should ungraciously refuse the apple-meringue that she had chosen so carefully for his delight. She could not know that he was fighting with tears and with an awful lump that would come back in his throat no matter how hard he swallowed it, and she thought for the thousandth time, "I shall never understand James. Why is he so insensitive, so unlike Lionel?"

After tea she said, "It is James's last night at home, so he is to choose what we are to do. What would you like to do, James?"

James could think of nothing. What he longed passionately to do was to cry, with only his mother to hear, and to be comforted and loved and praised; to hear her say, in the soft voice she used sometimes when she came to kiss them good-night, that he was her brave boy and that he was going to do so well at school that every one would be proud of him. They would walk in the garden and he could tell her

of all the things he was going to do, and she would listen and admire him. But all he could do was sit still and look sulky. Lionel was full of ideas. "James, I know, let's get the carriage and drive down into the city." James interrupted rudely, "It's my pick, not yours," but the trouble was that he could think of nothing that he wanted to do. Fanny saw his misery, read it aright, and came to his rescue with a casual suggestion that saved the situation. The evening wore away, and bedtime came at last.

James knew that he had behaved badly, but something stronger than himself made him go on. Lionel, who was intensely interested in his brother's emotions in this exciting crisis, called to him as they lay in bed, " I wonder what you'll be feeling like this time to-morrow night, James?" and James replied fiercely, "Shut up!"—so fiercely that Lionel did, indeed, subside into silence. Then James, lying in the darkness waiting for his mother to come and bid them good-night, wished that his world could end there and then. He could not face the terrors of the morrow, he could not endure even the thought of it any longer. When his mother came he would tell her, and she would save him. But when Adela came he remembered Lionel lying in the bed across the way, remembered that he was twelve, he, James Hyde, and had always been brave and not a cry-baby. So he stiffened his heart against his own weakness, and Adela felt him stiffening and thought it was against her. The intimacy that had sprung up between mother and son that night when the *Dunbar* was wrecked was quite gone. Adela felt herself baffled by her son's pride and obstinacy, and the moment passed. She kissed him good-night tenderly and sorrowfully, and James held his breath lest it should reveal his agonies. He watched her turn to Lionel, waited till she had gone and Lionel slept, before his tears of frustrated love, remorse, and self-pity were allowed to flow.

It was a subdued but composed James who set off with his father the next morning, but the excitement of the journey soon overshadowed everything else. They travelled by the railway to Parramatta. It had only been opened a

couple of years, and, though the first novelty had worn off, this was James's first trip in it, and he stood at the window of his compartment or read the Government notices warning passengers of various dangerous actions with impartial interest. The size and noise of the great puffing engine alarmed him, but he was determined to remain calm. When the stationmaster rang the bell and the engine blew its shrill blast he sat very tight and held his breath, waiting for the great thing to bound instantly forward. The reality seemed very tame; the preliminary snorts and jerks that heralded the train's departure robbed it of its majesty and splendour. But it was very quick—only a short run, and they were at Parramatta and walking side by side along the dusty road that led to the King's School. The school was about ten minutes' walk from the station, and it was not long before it came in sight, a rectangular two-storied building with a pillared portico in the exact middle of the facade. The arched ecclesiastical-looking windows of the lower story, the square windows of the upper, did nothing to soften the bare, even harsh, outline.

Another hour, and James was standing alone at the gates, looking after William's retreating figure. He felt very lonely, almost sick. Little fragments of his father's speech to him as they had come up the road echoed meaninglessly in his ears. William had felt that he could not let this occasion pass without a solemn admonition to his son. It was right that a father should speak to his eldest son, who was his heir, seriously on such an occasion. All the way up in the train he had tried to think of appropriate things to say. Father and son had always been very good friends. From early childhood James had felt his kinship to William, but always it had been a silent bond. They had never talked much at all, and when they did it was always of quite impersonal topics. But James had recognized the signs of an impending sermon, with a boy's certain instinct. So many people seemed to think that because a fellow was going to school they must preach to him about his opportunities and so on. Why couldn't they all be like his grandpapa, who had only said, "Good-bye, James, be a good

boy," and then clapped five thick golden sovereigns into his hand, with a wink that told James he need not mention them to his papa. When James had heard his father clear his throat in a particularly portentous way he had known the time had come. William had said:

"My dear boy, I feel I cannot let you go to school without speaking to you very seriously about the great opportunities you have before you. Neither your grandfather nor I had the chance which you now have, of going to a public-school. But we are sending you because you will be the heir to all that we are building now, and must be trained to take your position fittingly. We have built up a great business here, James, and we have made a position here in this country equal to any man's. And you are to have it. It is for you. So you understand what it means to us that you should do well at school. You do understand, James?"

James had shuffled his feet in the dust and said, "Yes, Papa," and had felt thankful that the iron gates that guarded the entrance to the King's School were close upon them. They had seemed almost a refuge then—now they were prison gates, his father's figure, nearly out of sight, his one last link with the old life. James clinked the five golden sovereigns in his pockets, and turned to face the future.

III

The house at Hunter's Hill had been named Firenze in deference to its Italian origin; its gardens had been cleared and formally laid out; the furniture had arrived, and was now installed. The time had come to leave the Laburnums. The evening before they moved Adela wandered from room to dismantled room, taking her leave of them. No one else minded leaving this house; it had served its purpose, and they had finished with it now. Adela did not really mind very much herself; she knew Firenze was much more beautiful, she had loved it at first sight, and it excited her not a little to think that she was mistress of such an establishment. But to-night as she looked for the last time on

these familiar rooms to which she had come nearly fourteen years before, she felt sad, as if she were losing something whose value she had not known till it was taken from her.

Most of the furniture had been sold with the house, and the new owners would take possession on the morrow as soon as the Hydes had left. She stood by her little work-table and traced meaningless figures on its surface with her forefinger. She had brought this little table from England with her. It had been one of her wedding-gifts, and for nearly fourteen years she had sat by it and sewed and worked. She had wanted to take it with her, but it was very scarred and disfigured by mementoes of her boys' games and battles. When she had suggested taking it William had told her of the present he had ordered for her among the new furniture for the house—a specially designed work-table. So Adela saw that it would be foolish to take the old one with her. The new one was much more beautiful, of course; it was made of rosewood, its carved circular top resting on the upheld arms of two carven Cupids, whose rotund little bodies tapered into mermaids' tails which met and intertwined below, spreading out again into endlessly enwreathed claw feet. Adela knew it was foolish and sentimental to feel, as she did to-night, that she preferred the old battered and dented table to her beautiful new one, but she could not help it. As she stood there she looked up and saw Fanny at the open door of the room, and knew she understood. Fanny said gently, "Take it with you, Adela. Papa can quite easily arrange it. I'll see him about it if you like." The sisters-in-law smiled at each other across the room. They had never been so close before.

The next day they moved into Firenze. Of all the things that had accompanied the family from Windmill Street to City Road, the golden clock, with its wreathed and intricate face, almost alone survived to take this journey too. Now it was relegated to the breakfast-room, whence it could catch occasional glimpses of its supplanter on the great marble chimney-piece of the dining-room beyond. It stood

high amidst its surroundings of cupids and foliage, flanked on either side by large mirrors in gilt frames which were repeated on a smaller scale on the gilt pier-tables at the side. It stared across the great oak table with its brood of hard-favoured chairs, and saw itself reflected in the mirror set in a scrolled frame surmounting the magnificent chiffonier opposite, its shelves borne up by gilded page-boys.

The drawing-rooms, opening into each other by an archway guarded on each side by a statuette, were furnished in rosewood with ivory or enamel inlaying. The ottoman couches were ornamented in white enamel with the story of Penelope and her suitors, in bas-relief. The pianoforte, which held the place of honour, for they were only recently in vogue, was covered with ebony, inlaid and enriched with gold in relief. Before the severe fireplace stood a fire-screen in a carved rosewood frame, its circular panel worked in the fashionable tapestry of the day with a delightfully rustic scene. The occasional tables, chairs, cabinets, and caskets of *papier mâché*, without which no drawing-room of the fifties was considered complete, were there in full profusion. In the bedrooms were French or Arabian bedsteads, great winged wardrobes and chests of drawers, dressing-tables and washstands, with carved tops and scrolled legs, all in mahogany. William, as he walked from room to room, superintending the work of unpacking and arranging, felt that all was as it should be.

Only one thing, he felt, now spoiled the perfection of his content. It was not fitting that his sister, Miss Hyde, should attend the business each day and work there like an ordinary clerk. William admitted that Fanny had been useful, almost indispensable in the early days of the gold-rush, when business had multiplied every day and labour was unobtainable. She was very useful now, with her clear grasp of the business and her meticulous accuracy in accountancy. But things were quite different now. People had understood the emergency earlier; they had recognized the necessity; but now there was no necessity, and it was an increasing vexation to William that spoiled even his satis-

faction in the new house that Fanny refused to see how improper her position had now become. But Fanny was impervious to all William's hints, and had very peremptorily cut short the long, closely reasoned speech with which he had prepared to convince her of her impropriety. William had early learned that in some moods Fanny was not to be reasoned with, and he was forced for the time to abandon the subject, though it continued to rankle in his mind.

The Hydes settled into Firenze, and very soon felt that they had lived there always. The whole neighbourhood rolled up in their carriages along the wide circular sweep of the drive to leave their cards; all their friends came up the river to call and to admire. They became part of the social fabric of the Hill. They wanted to express their position in one clear statement. The quartermaster had months ago set his heart on a great 'house-warming' which should enable the world to come and see how well he had done for himself and his family. His hospitable soul yearned, too, to see large masses of people crammed within his walls. His first crude idea was toned down, by endless discussion, into a ball, which every one agreed should be the event of the winter season. The plan had been made some time before, but of course they had had to wait until they had been accepted in the neighbourhood, when it would appear as a graceful return for the hospitality they had been offered as newcomers.

The delay had permitted the ladies to send home for their gowns. Adela had commissioned her eldest sister to procure, for herself, for Fanny, and even for poor Esther, ball-gowns of the very latest mode from Paris, where the lovely Empress Eugénie's empire of beauty and fashion was at the height of its sway. Yet now, a week before the ball, when the invitations were all accepted, when all other arrangements were complete, the scheme of decoration finally decided, the more difficult problem of supper and its service provisionally solved, no gowns had yet arrived. Adela was in despair, Fanny no less so, for, probably in reaction to the trim greys and browns in which she went to business each day, Fanny blossomed forth more brilliantly

at night and loved more keenly than in her youth the pleasures of delicate colour and line and fabric. They had depended entirely on Harriet, and it was too late to see what the Sydney *modistes* could do for them. Esther, of course, seemed to take a melancholy pleasure in their disappointment. Adela had meant the gown to be a surprise to her, but had been forced to anticipate the gift because Esther refused her invitation on the grounds of having no ball-gown. Adela felt how dreadful it was that nobody really wanted poor Esther to come, and when Esther practically suggested that the invitation was given disingenuously and only because every one knew she couldn't accept, having no gown, she had to rebut the accusation by revealing the coming surprise.

Almost as much for the pleasure of confounding Esther's determined pessimism as for the pleasure of the gowns themselves, every one rejoiced when the s.s. *Great Britain*, berthing five days before the eventful night, brought among her cargo the boxes with their precious contents. For Adela there was a clouded lilac *merveilleux*, with tiers of ruches that would rise from hem to waist over the immense crinoline, and would allow her slender figure with its embroidered lilac sheath to rise flower-like above its billows; for Fanny, a maize-coloured Chambéry gauze mounted on silk of a deeper shade, its deep flounces trimmed with rows of narrow black velvet; for Esther, a grey taffeta with flounces of shot grey-green silk glinting with new lights as one turned it from side to side. Harriet had done her work with good will. The crinoline was at its widest in that year, so cloaks were impossible, but she had included scarves of shaded grenadine, of brocatelle with embroidered flowers, and of the new, heavily fringed *crêpe de Chine*. Only Esther still cast a gloom.

"Does it not seem strange," she inquired of the heavens, when Adela with Lionel paid a special trip to the Glebe to see her delight in the lovely things and to arrange for her to stay at Firenze on the night of the party, "that some people should be able to waste money on useless objects, when others cannot afford the most necessary comforts? I do

not complain of Providence, of course, but at times things seem very unfair."

Adela found it very difficult to be kind to Esther at times, but she felt she must, especially now that the difficulties of travel made it impossible for Esther to pay her Thursday visits.

Everything that could be prepared beforehand for the ball was in readiness, when, two days before the day fixed for the event, Lionel fell ill. He was unwell on and off all day. It was an indefinable sickness and he did not know where it distressed him. At one moment he would be leaning limp and wretched against a tree, and the next he would feel quite well and would jump and run to prove to himself that there was nothing the matter. At the end of an interminable day he could not eat his tea, and felt depressed and lonely because nobody noticed that he was ill and Adela was out late at a dinner-party. When she came home and was tiptoeing past the boy's room, he called her, and she came in to find him sitting up stiffly in his bed, very flushed and in evident distress with his throat. She did what she could to relieve him and he got a little troubled sleep, but in the morning he was worse and a bright red rash had come up on his body. By the time the doctor came there was little doubt of his malady. Lionel had scarlet fever. Adela was determined to nurse him herself. Within the hour the nursery became a sick-room, and a long illness was methodically prepared for. The familiar and cheerful room became muted and portentous. At night it hung like a pale lamp in the dark and silent house, and by day it was a world of quiet in the subdued activities of everyday life. Lionel's fever was well staged. When he tossed and muttered in delirium it was more like the voice of the room than his voice. Adela slept in James's narrow bed, which filled her with nostalgia for her girlhood.

The day of the party came and went unheeded, for Lionel was in danger. Fanny had written discreet notes to all the guests, and a manservant delivered them, that being a more genteel mode of acquainting them than the common post. Kind inquiries and the ritual baskets of fruit came daily and the report was always "worse." Fanny strongmindedly

continued to go each morning to the store. Coming home each evening, she raised her eyes in apprehension to the house and no one dared draw down a blind.

The worst night came. The doctor came three times a day and again at midnight, but there was nothing more to do. Infection mattered little now. Katie begged to share the watch with Adela, but was driven away. William stood for a long time at the foot of the bed, and Adela wanted to send him away too, but she reflected that Lionel was his son and she had no right. He was pale and anxious, but for her jealous heart that was not enough.

"If it were James," she thought, "he would be beside himself."

"Dear," she said, "you must get some rest. Lie down in the next room, and if there is any change I will rap on the wall." He went heavily away. The emptiness of the vigil wore him down—if only they could put poultices on him or something! Every hour Fanny came to the door; Adela's will rose up invisibly to keep her out. Adela, waiting, kept saying to herself, "I must pray. Now is the time to pray." But she could not fix her mind on God. When she tried she could only see the rector of St Barnabas', who was Mr Monk's cousin.

At four o'clock Adela thought she saw a change, the more terrible as it was so slight. She laid her hand on Lionel's heart, and for a second thought it had stopped. She was possessed with terror and something deeper. She gathered him into her arms, his fluttering heart on hers. In that moment she reverted a thousand years, holding him closer and closer as if there were some efficacy in the body that had borne him, driving her life into him, drawing the fever into herself. Fanny came swiftly into the room.

"What are you doing?" she cried, and took the boy from his mother's arms and laid him on the bed. She snatched up a candle and peered into his face, then felt his pulse and brow. The pulse was more even, the skin moist.

"There is a change. He is better," she said almost sharply, and went for William.

Adela stood still with her hands hanging down and her

lips stiffened into a sort of smile. She was not even glad. She could never know if she had wrought a miracle, if the change she had seen had been the ebb or the flow of life, or merely the shadow of the candle-flame. She could not know if her action had tapped the ancient magic of Elijah or had been only the frenzy of a terrified mother.

IV

As Lionel's temperature subsided Adela's rose. The exhausted household had no sooner relaxed than it was called upon to bear a new burden. Adela, worn down by strain and fatigue, was in no condition to fight a serious illness. Fanny stayed at home from the store for the first time in seven years, and every one leaned on her. Adelaide Gillam said openly that this was the judgment of God upon the Hydes. William walked in the null splendour of his costly reception-rooms and felt that they mocked him. The night when he had watched Adela hanging over Lionel had removed her very far from him. He looked upon her now almost as an angel. But something painful and disintegrating kept bubbling up through his fortitude. He wanted to express his misery and anxiety, but spontaneous expression had long dried up in him. He was wretched, and the quartermaster nearly drove him mad by repeating over and over again, "This is a bad business, a very bad business!" He would even put down the carving-knife at dinner to say it. When the quartermaster became emotional and reminiscent William became frigid, because he could not bear it. One night William said suddenly:

"Do you think we should send for James?" It had come to that.

"Did she ask for him?"

"No."

"It would do no good, it would only harrow the child. He is happy now," the old man sighed.

"It is his right," said William.

"Right be hanged!" exploded the quartermaster.

William hesitated, and James was not sent for.

Adela moved in a dark, tormented world far from them all. At first she confused this illness with her other illness when Lionel was born, but afterward she went farther afield.

She was walking along a white road in summer, and it was very hot. At the end of the road there was a tall black house of tarred wood. When she came to the house Lionel called to her from inside, but she could not go to him because there were no doors or windows on the ground-floor. She walked round and round the house. The shadow that it cast was hotter than the sunlight. Lionel cried to her despairingly from an upstairs window, stretching out his hands. As she looked at the house it began to sink, till presently it lay as flat on the grass as a great dark stain. It was only a stain, and there was nothing under it.

A little doll that was herself mounted a high ladder in her brain. At the top of the ladder sat God, Who was Mr Monk's cousin. She felt very hot and thought it must be the glory of God shining on her. With every rung of the ladder she said, "*Now* I must pray," but she could not pray, and although she was climbing all the time she never got any nearer to God, Who looked just as you would expect Mr Monk's cousin to look, and sat bunched up at the top of the ladder.

She was crossing a bridge that she had seen once in a picture. It was no more than a steel skeleton, very high and very narrow. She could see the water a hundred feet below, black with white foam-wreaths upon it, and flowing swiftly. She could see the country very clearly, but everything was tiny, the houses like matchboxes, the trees like the little wooden trees in a Noah's Ark. William and Fanny and the quartermaster and a lot of other people waited for her, but she was happy on the bridge, looking at the water. Then she grew suddenly aware that there was something on the narrow bridge behind her, overtaking her, and she was terrified and could not move. But nothing happened, and when she looked back there was nothing, but with every step she took the bridge fell away behind her. James and Lionel ran toward her from the other end of the bridge.

She called to them to stop, but they did not hear her—and as they went forward the bridge fell away behind them, till they were all standing together on a single pillar. The pillar bent with their weight. William made a frantic gesture to her from the shore. The pillar would not hold them; it began to crack. Lionel was falling, and she let James go to catch him. James fell slowly, turning over and over in the air, and she felt the pillar spring back. Then she was in her bed and Fanny stood at the window. She said, "Lionel," and Fanny came quickly to her. Out of the confusion of fever and delirium, Adela slowly rose into the cool tranquillity of her bedroom and Fanny's sane ministrations. At first she was so glad to be free that she wanted nothing but to lie in her smooth bed, to look sometimes at the shadows on the blind or the rings of light on the ceiling, and then to close her eyes. It was days before she discovered that her hair had been cut off.

James came home for his holidays. When he turned the corner at the top of the hill from the ferry he looked eagerly to see if his mamma was at the gate to meet him. She was not there, nor at the door, but he would not show his disappointment. He whistled as he darted round to the back of the house, where he knew he would find some one. He would not ring his own door-bell like a stranger. The house was so grave and quiet that he wondered if they could have forgotten his return and gone out. He almost hoped they had, for then they would be sorry and apologetic, and make more fuss of him than ever. Katie met him in the courtyard.

"There you are, Master James!" she exclaimed. "I was just going round to the gate to look for you."

"Where's Mamma?" he said.

"Your mamma's been very ill; you'll find your Aunt Fanny in the morning-room, and she'll say if you can go up."

He had known that Lionel had the fever but not how badly. William had told him that his mother was nursing Lionel and would not be able to write to him. Of her illness he had heard nothing. He had had the three weeks of careless happiness they wanted for him.

He burst in on Fanny. "Where is my mamma?"

"Gently, James!" said Fanny. "Your mamma has been very ill. She caught the fever from Lionel, but she is getting better, thank God. You can see her for a minute presently."

James felt as if he had turned to clay from his feet to his heart, but from his heart up he was blazing with anger.

"Why did you not tell me?"

"We wanted you to be happy, dear, and you could do no good, or even come home, because of the infection. Your grandpapa and your papa thought it best."

Fanny went on telling him about the illness. She could see that it had been a mistake not to tell him, that he was deeply wounded. She wanted to comfort him, but she said the wrong thing.

"I'm afraid these will be very dull holidays for you, James. Mamma is out of danger and the infection is over, but the house must be kept very quiet and I shall have to spend most of my time looking after her. Lionel is not strong yet, the doctor thinks his heart has been affected so he has to be kept quiet, too."

She said it almost as if she were apologizing to him for his spoilt holiday, as if he cared only for himself and was hardly one of them at all. Adela was awake, and James was permitted to see her for a minute. He hardly recognized her bedroom, so subdued was it. Any sort of illness or weakness made him uncomfortable, and Mamma with thin, white face and cropped hair filled him with terror. He felt utterly clumsy and wretched, and suffered all the anxiety that the others had felt in three weeks compressed into an hour.

"Well, darling?" said Adela in a weak voice, holding out a thin hand to him.

"You ought to have told me, Mamma; it wasn't fair not to tell me." It was not what he meant to say. He wanted to tell her how glad he was that she was getting better, but the other burst out.

"Oh, James!" she said. "Oh, James!"—and two tears rolled down her cheeks.

Fanny drew James out into the passage. She was very angry with him. "How could you? Can't you think of anybody but yourself? Go and wash your hands. Katie has your lunch ready."

He cried as he washed, and dried his tears with his towel. It was like Mamma and Lionel to go and get ill together behind his back. He supposed Lionel was awfully cocky about having nearly died, and would want to talk about it. James's lunch was set on a tray in the dining-room. He carried the tray round to the quartermaster's place at the head of the table, and sat in his grandfather's chair. He had never sat in that chair before, it was sacred to the quartermaster. James sat there gravely now in the empty room in the quiet house, and ate his lunch, his eyelids still stiff from the tears he had shed. He felt quite different from the boy who had been at school yesterday. It comforted him to sit in his grandfather's chair. It made him feel sufficient.

"I am the eldest son," he thought. "This is my seat when Grandpapa and Papa are not here. Some day I'll be head of the family. They can't take that away."

It irked James terribly to be gentle with Lionel. He thought he must be well after all this time, and that he was only pretending to be ill so that people would notice him.

"If a mad bull chased you, you could run all right then."

"I couldn't," said Lionel. "I'd drop down dead."

"Pooh!" said James rudely, "only old people do that."

"Yes, I would. Katie told Mary I would, so there!"

"You wouldn't be any good at school, then. You couldn't play games, and no one would look at you."

"I'm not going to school."

"Oh, aren't you? What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to stay at home with Mamma."

"You're very pleased with yourself, aren't you?" cried James angrily, "after you've nearly killed my mamma with your beastly fever and all."

The fatal taunt had been seething in his mind all day, and now in his sudden rage it had slipped off his tongue. In an instant he regretted it. Lionel's face went very white and his mouth trembled, but he said nothing. When Fanny came in she looked sharply at Lionel.

"Are you not feeling so well, dear?" she asked.

"I want to go to bed," said Lionel, and was put to bed at once.

James felt guilty and angry. He had only said what was true. Lionel was a cheat to be ill and put him in the wrong.

When Adela was convalescent she spent a great part of every day on the wide veranda which looked toward the river. Lionel asked nothing better than to stay with her, and they were very happy together. Their weakness had levelled them so that they were more like two children than mother and son. They had their jokes, and told one another their thoughts, and made plans as if the future held only themselves. James would have liked to join them. He could hear their friendly voices and laughter from the garden, but when he joined them he was always conscious of a slight check. Adela was aware of it, too. James was tall for his age, and his likeness to his father was very marked. Adela could not believe that the likeness was only skin-deep. Her reactions to James were an echo of her reactions to William, and she was beginning to find it difficult to be spontaneous with James. The months he spent away from her at school made him almost as much a stranger to her as her husband was. When he came and stood by her couch she tried to let no change creep into her conversation or even her thoughts, but a vague constraint always settled on the group, fight against it as she would. James, conscious of an intangible rebuff, always became morose. He would stand with his back to her and kick the veranda post till Adela thought he was bored and had only come to visit her from a sense of duty. She would say gently, "These are very dull holidays for you, dear. I am sorry. If there is anything you want to do now, don't let me keep you," and he would take it as his dismissal and go sulkily away. Adela

persuaded William to give him a dinghy, and he was allowed to go out in it alone on the river. He grew very fond of the water and spent half the day in his boat, working off his excess energy by violent paddling. It fostered a streak of solitariness, and already James's 'moods' began to be recognized as a definite ingredient of family life. The memory of these holidays filled him ever afterward with a sense of distaste and distress. In those weeks his life darkened and thickened, the stiff material of which he was made was bent into its final shape. After this there was growth, but not change.

V

Adela lay in her bed one evening, looking at the ceiling while William read to her. She did not listen to the words, but it was very kind of him, she reflected, for he always came back tired from his day's work; but William always had been very kind. Adela's eyes overflowed with tears, for she was still very weak although seven weeks had passed since her illness began. She wiped them away quietly before William should see and inquire their reason. She heard Fanny's light, decided step passing her open door, and thought gratefully of her kindness. How lovely it must be to be able to help people as Fanny did! When the reading stopped she thanked William weakly, and they rested a moment in silence.

"Fanny will have to go back to the store soon, I suppose. I shall miss her, she has been so very good," Adela said. William answered slowly, "She will not be returning, I think, my love. We have filled her place very suitably, and both Papa and I feel very strongly that her place is here. It has been most unsuitable and quite unnecessary for a long time now. So you must just think of getting better, and you will not have to trouble your little head with household cares until you are quite well again."

Adela would have answered, but Fanny at that moment tapped on the door and entered. She asked William to fasten the shutters for the night while she busied herself with the bed. Adela caught at her hand.

"Fanny," she whispered, "it is very sweet of you to give up your work for my sake. William has just told me it is for good. Really, there is no need——" Fanny snatched her hand away, and Adela looked up to see her standing with set face and blazing eyes.

"William," said Fanny, and her voice was hard and stark, "are you trying to turn me out of my work because I came home to nurse your wife?" William quailed, though he knew his cause was righteous. He had not meant that Adela should speak to Fanny. She was simply to find when she wanted to return that there was no longer any place for her at the store, but he had not had time to warn Adela, and the harm was done. Adela cried, "Oh, Fanny!" and began to weep helplessly. William bent over her, thankful for the diversion and for the silent reproach he could direct toward his sister for upsetting the invalid. Fanny said quietly and very bitterly, "You coward, William!" and walked downstairs to find her father. She tried to set her thoughts in order as she walked. She knew that she was putting herself at a disadvantage by speaking to him while she was still seething with anger against William and the treachery that waited till her back was turned to snatch from her what she valued most in life. But she could not wait till she had schooled herself to calm; she must see him at once to fight for what was hers. She could not go back to the narrow, interminable sameness and triviality of the life before she had found her place at the store. The work was hers; she was part of it. It would be losing part of her life to lose that. But it was not fear, it was blind, unreasoning anger that dominated her now. How dared William! She had come home to nurse Adela his wife; almost she had saved Adela's life, the doctor had said it, and he had taken advantage of her absence to fill her place so that she could not return. What was most intolerable of all was that he had not spoken to her at all, but had calmly told Adela, as if Fanny's life were a thing to be disposed of as he would.

Fanny found the quartermaster in the garden, leaning over the Italian balustrade that separated the upper from

the lower garden, smoking a peaceful pipe. She said abruptly, "Papa, are you allowing William to turn me out?"

"Turn you out, Fan! What do you mean?"

"From the store. He told Adela that I was not returning. You employed me to work there, Papa. Are you dismissing me?"

The quartermaster was distressed. He took Fanny's arm and felt her tremble, and he thought, "How like a woman to make a fuss like this!" He walked with her slowly round the gravelled carriage-drive before he answered. "I'm sorry that you feel as you do, my dear. You've done well at the work and I'm proud of you. Travers, you know, has come back, and after he has served us faithfully for so many years we can't turn him out, can we?"

"So you turn me out instead," said Fanny. "Haven't I served you faithfully too?"

"Come now, Fanny, that's not the way to look at it. Your brother thought it best for all concerned, and you'll find he's right, if you'll look at it like a sensible girl. They can't get on without you here. Addie won't be fit for anything for months yet, poor girl. You can't desert her, and William says with Travers back in charge of the office there's really nothing for you to do."

He paused hopefully, and as Fanny did not answer he squeezed her arm affectionately and walked up the shallow steps to the house, leaving her standing on the drive below. Fanny walked slowly back to the Italian balustrade and stood where she had found her father, her hands on the cold stone. The stars and the thin crescent of the new moon made the night lovely; before her, the river lay deep in its enchanted sleep. She was shivering but was not conscious of the cold. She could fight no more. She could, of course, insist on returning, and she knew that William could not resist her will if she chose to assert it. But what use was it, when her father's last words were still ringing in her ears? She had thought herself a necessary part of the life of the store, but now that Travers was back there was nothing for her to do. It was all an illusion then, she was

no more necessary there than here, a stop-gap when others deserted or fell ill, nothing else. She would not go again to the store, as it needed nothing from her. The place she had filled for seven years had closed in behind her as she stepped from it, and there was left no mark even to show where it had been. She supposed she must stay at home controlling the household until Adela grew strong enough to take back the reins of management. Then what?—a long, straight path of nothingness. That was all she could see in life. She had defied that destiny once before; now destiny had won. The passion and storm of her heart subsided, leaving only a great weariness and a hard, unbreaking core of bitterness against William. Fanny spoke no word of friendship or sisterly affection to William for years, until the great catastrophe that came to the house of Hyde wiped out the past and brought them together again in grief and bitter pain.

VI

Lionel's education presented a problem. Adela thought him too delicate for boarding-school, and was determined to fight the issue. Both the quartermaster and William thought the boy should go to school, though they arrived at their conclusion by different routes. Adela, usually so yielding, fought them both, and at last William was forced to say:

"If you are determined, Adela, we will say no more."

Adela was unreasonably angered by his capitulation. "He would not have given way so readily if it had been James," she thought.

The quartermaster shook his head. "It isn't right, Adela. You spoil that boy. Pity he couldn't have been a girl."

"We will all be proud of Lionel some day," she answered, lifting her chin.

It was arranged at last that Lionel should share a tutor with the Hillis children. Mr Hillis was a widower and a man of substance; his fine house looked over the Parramatta, a quarter of a mile from Firenze. It was an impressive

house with a pillared gateway and fine wrought-iron gates that had come from Italy. Like everything else in the house, his tutor was imported and of a high quality, for Mr Hillis had an only son and he was a cripple. William and Mr Hillis struck up a mutual esteem, and agreed that their sons might share the tutor with advantage to both. So a gentlemanly but quite businesslike arrangement was made, and Lionel climbed over the crest of the hill every morning with a satchel of books on his shoulder.

Mr Hillis had three children, the boy Ormond, who was twelve years old, Rhoda, aged fourteen, and an elder daughter, who kept house for him. Ormond had an obscure disease of the spine, and was weak and misshapen. As a young child his father had even taken him home to see if English and Continental doctors could do anything for him. They had pronounced the case incurable but not mortal, and Mr Hillis had brought the boy back to Australia, determined to make his life as full and as happy as his infirmity would allow. He had no *flair* for making children happy, but he spared no expense, and the quick-witted child was the tyrant of the home.

Rhoda shared her brother's tutor. She was a tall, fair girl with long flaxen plaits, and she reminded Lionel of bread and butter. Of the elder daughter he was for a long time only dimly aware; she drifted occasionally across the background of dark, shining furniture in the sombre and lofty rooms of her father's house. He thought her beautiful, but unreal.

At first the house, which was in reality no larger than Firenze, seemed to Lionel like a large and commodious prison, and it never became quite commonplace. The rooms were lofty, and furnished in the dark and sombre style of another generation. Even in summer the rooms were always cool, and on wet winter afternoons the candles had to be brought. Lionel never felt comfortable when the candles were lit and the heavy dark red curtains drawn across the windows. He would look at the polished surface of the great square table where they sat, as if he were staring into the depths of another world. The candles were

reflected in it, and Rhoda's face suddenly became interesting, with black lips and dark hollows for eyes; the tutor's face, well marked in life, with heavy brows, long, sharp nose, and mobile mouth, became little short of horrific; while Lionel's own face rose up to him blanched and ghostly like something drowned. Always afterward when he thought of his schooling it seemed to Lionel more like something reflected in a mirror than a reality, and always at the bottom of its deep tranquillity was a slight distaste. But the thing that really mattered, that affected him most lastingly, was Margaret Hillis's practising. The sound of scales and exercises crept through closed doors—chromatic scales going up and up in a pointless and unfinished ecstasy, the clear, definite, meaningless pattern of the exercises, and then sonatas and fugues and nocturnes. In the winter, when the windows were closed, the music fell into the background, but in the summer, when the house was thrown open, it marched in among them, it wrapped Lionel away from his Cicero or Euclid, it mingled with everything he did. He read English poetry by the light of Beethoven, and history according to Bach. Sometimes the music distressed him and sometimes it elated him. Listening to Margaret Hillis playing, he came to know her; he knew when she was happy and when she was sad.

"Why is your sister always playing the piano?" he asked Ormond one day.

"Oh," he replied indifferently, "it's what she likes. Papa won't let her play in public, so she just goes on learning and practising. She can't practise when Papa's at home because he doesn't like the noise. That's why we get it all."

"She plays well, doesn't she?"

"Not too badly, but what's the good?" Lionel didn't know what the good was, but he felt vaguely hostile to Ormond. One day Ormond told him that his sister was in love with the tutor.

"How do you know? Did she tell you?"

"Of course not, silly."

"Then how do you know?"

"Everybody knows except Papa, and he'd send him away if he knew. If I want him to go I'll tell Papa."

Lionel received this cold-blooded remark in silence, but the subject fascinated him and drew him back.

"Do you think he's in love with her?"

"I don't expect so—he's only polite."

Lionel looked at the tutor and tried to think of Margaret Hillis and to listen to the music at the same time, but the three ideas would not fit in his head at once. The music kept pushing the tutor out, and he did not believe Ormond. Then one morning, instead of the scales with which she usually began, Margaret played Mendelssohn's *Spring Song*. It flowed out upon them in a splendid, glittering, triumphant stream. The tutor raised his head quickly, then got up and closed the door very quietly. Lionel knew then that it was true, and the thought oppressed him. After that he was more acutely sensitive to the music, as if he were laid open to the meaning she put into it.

When Adela played the hymns and sentimental airs that were the measure of her musical skill Lionel was troubled.

"Could you play the things Miss Margaret plays, Mamma?"

"What does she play, dear?"

"I don't know. Very long pieces and different. They make you feel as if you had another ear right inside, and it was listening, too."

"I expect it's classical music. You are a funny boy to like it."

"Mamma, could I learn to play the piano?" She looked at him in surprise.

"I will ask Papa if you like."

"Please, oh, please, Mamma."

William and the quartermaster both thought it a strange request.

"He's not musical, is he?" asked the quartermaster in alarm. "Or artistic, or anything like that?"

At last William said, "It's waste of time for a boy, of course, but as Lionel is delicate, and it does not look as if he were going to do anything with his studies, I think there

would be no harm in his taking music lessons as you wish it, my love."

So Adela went to see Margaret Hillis to ask her advice about a music-master. She had only seen the girl once or twice, because Mr Hillis did not entertain and considered it improper for her to accept invitations. When Adela told her how Lionel admired her music and what he had said about the little ear inside Margaret flushed with pleasure, and Adela thought there were tears in her eyes. She took a great interest in Lionel and his music lessons. Sometimes she asked him into the drawing-room after his lessons were over, and played to him or talked to him about music eagerly and earnestly as if he could understand everything she said. He conceived a romantic passion for her, which made him very young and awkward in her presence and filled his mind with splendid dreams, so that he could hardly sleep at night. As for his music, he tried very hard, but scales and exercises lacked the glamour of those merely heard. Too soon, without the knowledge of his master, he began to play music far too difficult for him, to play it incorrectly and haltingly while his inner ear caught the real music under his stumblings. Sometimes he was plunged in despair, but for the most part he was content to suggest music to himself. Adela thought him wonderful.

VII

Just after the New Year of 1860 had come in on a great wave of heat old Mr Gillam died. He was seventy-four and had been an old man for a very long time. The quartermaster was genuinely grieved. Though they had never been intimate friends he felt a deep sense of personal loss. Mr Gillam's illness had been long drawn out, and had imposed a strain upon the whole family, although Mrs Gillam and Adelaide had borne the brunt of it. Her daughters tried to persuade the old lady to sell the big house at Balmain and live with Adelaide in a smaller, more convenient place, but she would not hear of it. For years she had thought of herself as the *châtelaine* of a big establishment, and she

would not destroy that picture of herself now. The utmost she would agree to was to go for a long rest to Gillam Park. To her daughters she would not go. Adelaide was to remain in charge of the house at Balmain, but she accepted for the week following her father's funeral the hospitality which the quartermaster urged Adela to offer her at Firenze. When the will was read it was found that Mr Gillam had left Gillam Park and a large sum of money to Humphrey, and to his widow the house at Balmain and a share of the income from the business. Each of his daughters was entitled to a proportion, but the controlling interest and management were left entirely to Franklin, Sophia's husband. Old Gillam had made this intention clear for some time, but the accomplished fact caused bitter strife in the Gillam family, the more bitter because it had to be concealed.

"It is nothing to me, of course," said Adelaide. "I have never been one to interest myself in business concerns. I do not believe in women stepping outside their proper sphere. But I suppose it is hard on my sisters to have Sophia's husband preferred before theirs. Sophia has been selfish all her life, and the selfish people always get the best of things."

Adelaide would not stay longer than a week, and Adela, noticing the sub-acid quality of her relations with Fanny, was very thankful, though she pressed her dutifully to remain. She had her work in the Church, and her work at home, Adelaide said. Adelaide belonged to a society of Anglican ladies which had been formed in 1854, in connexion with one of the principal city churches, to make and distribute warm clothing and other charitable gifts among the poor of the city, and to exercise as far as possible a beneficent control over their morals and behaviour. The vicissitudes of the gold years and the reckless spending that they fostered had made nearly as much poverty as wealth, and Sydney now afforded as much scope for charitable work as any city of the old world. Adelaide and her society found their hands full, and they were always appealing for more helpers. It was impossible, they found, to make exhaustive inquiries into the circumstances of every applicant for aid, yet that

was necessary if they were to exercise the moral control that was the most important part of their work.

Especially did they resent the new work of education started in their midst by a young and enthusiastic clergyman. The Rev. Mr Hardwick had begun Sunday-school classes to which he hoped to bring the poorest children and youths of the city, but when his classes assembled he found that he could hardly hope to begin serious religious instruction for quite a long time. Very few of his scholars could read or write, but he was not discouraged. He organized a band of assistants, men and women, and arranged classes not only on Sundays, but for every afternoon and evening of the week on which some could be gathered together. The organization grew. Tiny children playing half naked in the gutters, half-grown loutish boys, even young men and women were brought within its scope. Religious instruction formed only a small part of the teaching. They were taught to read and write and cipher, the girls to sew and do fine lace-work, the boys some of the simpler mechanic arts. Adelaide and many of the ladies thought it a great waste of time and misdirected effort. "It is only filling their heads with a lot of nonsense above their station in life," they said, and wondered at the old Rector allowing his curate to introduce such revolutionary and radical ideas. They told him so often, and he would listen to them and pay them pretty compliments and praise their work, but somehow Mr Hardwick's work continued, and flourished exceedingly.

Adelaide talked a lot of her work to Adela and Fanny. She hoped Fanny would see the distinction she was trying to make without actually saying it, between what was womanly work and what was not. Fanny had a great struggle with herself after Adelaide had gone. She did not want to work for the sake of doing good, as some of these ladies did, for the sake of feeling virtuous or for the sense of power over others, as more of them did. The only work she really wanted was to take part in the everyday work of the world, to feel herself part of the machinery of life. But as she couldn't have that she must find something else that would give her an outlet for her energy and capacity. She simply

could not endure doing nothing for another month. The social round exasperated her intolerably, so that she could not even behave agreeably. She knew she had made herself unpopular among the ladies of the Hill, and that Adela was feeling the strain of her taciturnity, but she could not help it. To-morrow she would go and see Mr Hardwick and offer her services. She knew he would welcome some one who would bring financial help, unvarying regularity in attendance, and clear judgment to aid his project. It was not what she wanted to do, but it would have to suffice, and at least she would have the satisfaction of beating Adelaide Gillam on her own ground.

So Fanny entered the philanthropic life of Sydney, and became a power in the land. The Rev. Mr Hardwick was glad in time to hand over to her capable hands the entire control of the female side of his Poor Schools. She brought to its problems a sane competence, practical common sense, and unswerving devotion, but the work never lit her spirit to enthusiasm. The inner core of bitterness remained untouched.

VIII

The early sixties were uneventful years, uneventful but prosperous. The Hydes became more and more firmly rooted in the life of the Hill. The Hill itself was expanding and becoming more important in the life of the community. It demanded more insistently than ever that it should be linked up with the city by bridges, which would make it possible for city magnates and their wives to drive to their places of business or gaiety instead of depending on the inadequate steam-packets or private boats. William and the quartermaster joined earnestly in the agitation. It was an age of faith in the efficacy of boards and councils, and every one felt immense satisfaction in the progress of events when in 1861 the municipality of Hunter's Hill was incorporated. A deputation of ratepayers waited upon William to ask him to accept nomination as alderman, and after due consideration he accepted. He explained his reasons to Adela.

"I feel that it is my duty, Adela. Do you not agree with me? We have a position to maintain here, and I must not shirk the obligations it entails upon me. We have been more fortunate than most people; we must not fail to work for others when the chance offers. I am not experienced in public affairs, but now that my fellow-citizens have honoured me in this way I cannot refuse. I feel," he added modestly, "that my business experience and financial training may be of use to them. Papa also is very pleased, and it would be a grievous disappointment to him if I were to refuse."

"Of course you must not refuse, William."

"I do not know. There is much to be considered. I dare not assume new responsibilities that would take me from the store. Papa is not what he was, of course, and I dare not relax my vigilance there."

"He is a wonderful old man. He seems scarcely to have changed since I came out first."

"Of course," William conceded, "he is still very vigorous, but my whole energy is needed in the business. And there is you, my love. Can your health bear the added strain of the social entertainment my public position would impose upon you?"

"How absurd, William! I am quite strong now. It really seems your duty to accept."

So it was decided, and William bore his new honours with a slightly greater dignity than ever. The Council met at the residence of the mayor, a town clerk was appointed at a salary of twenty-six pounds per annum, and they embarked at once upon an energetic scheme of civic improvement. William addressed a mass-meeting of inhabitants at Gould's Post Office Hotel, to urge the building of the bridges across the Parramatta and the Lane Cove. More than twenty years of agitation were to pass before the accomplishment of the project, but in the early sixties these things seemed just a hand's-breadth in the future. The high-water mark of the Hill's fashionable life was reached in the great regatta of 1862. From the inception of this event on New Year's Day in 1857 it had been made a fashionable occasion, but

never more so than now. Parties of ladies had met at Firenze or at other houses to work the design of the flag that was to be the prize in the most notable yacht race of the day. Fashionable Sydney rushed for tickets for the flagship. The Parramatta was alive with yachts, gigs, and dinghies. There was a great dinner-party at Firenze that night that partook of the nature of a public function. Life seemed set in a firm, clear mould that nothing could break or destroy.

CHAPTER XI

JAMES

Just before his eighteenth birthday James left school, where he had not distinguished himself greatly except on the playing-fields. His eighteenth birthday was his first day in the store, and in three years, when he was twenty-one, he would be admitted into partnership. His future seemed to be the most established thing in an established world.

At the store he was a power from the first, not by reason of any striking ability, but because the quartermaster made no secret of his pride and delight in his grandson. The men felt it would be to their advantage to flatter the boy who was destined for control, and customers paid him attention out of courtesy to his grandfather. James began to be invited out, and beheld with amazement and satisfaction the effect that his handsome person and still handsomer prospects had upon the young ladies of the Hill and their mammas. Lionel was still in the schoolroom, practising his Brahms and Bach, and generally wasting his time. James had moved into a spacious masculine world far above his head, and though that disconcerted Lionel not at all, James found infinite satisfaction in looking down from his vantage-point at his brother still becalmed in the ignominious depths of domesticity. James was pleased with himself and his world, and his world was undoubtedly pleased with him. At the bottom of his heart he still knew that his mother preferred her younger son, but this seemed so absurd that he could afford to ignore it even to himself, and he did ignore it, in italics.

In 1865, the year James was twenty, the Franklins came to live on the Hill. People did say that Franklin had come

to keep his eye on his rival and to flaunt his prosperity under his nose. Society preened itself and made ready to welcome them, but soon there were whispers. It was said that Sophia imparted only one maxim to her daughter and that was, "If you are clever enough to get what you want, you deserve it." Mothers shuddered and redoubled their vigilance. It was said, too, that Franklin talked freely of his business to his wife and daughter, and that Sophia and even Laurel expressed opinions about matters of which really refined females were in ignorance. The more charitable pointed out that Franklin did not look the kind of man to be influenced by women, and perhaps it was all malicious gossip. But whether these things were true or not, the Franklins were a little too plain-thinking for the genteel Hill, and a little too ornate even for the scrolled and gilded sixties. They took a large house and everything was arranged on a sumptuous scale. The garden was remodelled with an elegance that became the talk of the parish. A stucco pavilion after a Greek model overlooked the river, and white statues cast in plaster nestled in dark foliage, immense urns and flowerpots gushed cacti, and massive white seats, cold, hard, and unhealthy to sit upon, commanded all the best views of the river. In fact, everything that the art of the plasterer could do was done for the garden. The crowning glory was a fountain in front of the house, in which a female human form divine postured under a dome of water, like a figurine under a glass shade. She stood in the midst of a circular pool embellished with goldfish and artificial water-lilies. The chaster members of society were greatly shocked, and Sophia Franklin's explanation that the lady was Diana and that the pose was modest did little to retrieve her reputation.

As a counterblast to the fountain, to show what really nice people could do, the Sneddons erected a still larger one in which Neptune, arrayed in flowing vestments, was sprayed from the mouths of four dolphins. They gave a grand unveiling party to which the Franklins were invited, for the Franklins were invited to everything. At the solemn moment of unveiling Miss Laurel was heard to inquire if the fountain represented the baptism of a patriarch,

and to say she thought it a very nice religious piece. Adela and James were also at the party, James in very tight trousers and very long coat-tails, and Adela in grey silk as became the mother of James. James like a dutiful son walked with her on the lawn, and pretended that he did not notice various sidelong glances or hear not too inaudible whispers. On these occasions Adela was amused rather than proud to think of herself as James's mother.

Looking across the lawn, James beheld an animated gown of orange-coloured chiffon and black velvet, surmounted by a little hat like a patch of wallflowers, and carelessly wondered who the daring young lady might be.

"I shall have to go and speak to Sophia," said Adela. "Being your Aunt Maud's sister-in-law, of course I have to be civil to her. I expect Laurel is here too. I don't suppose you remember her, James. She was such a queer little thing—and she has not changed much."

James remembered Laurel perfectly—a funny little creature, very plain. He wondered tolerantly if she still made faces.

James walked down the grape-vine avenue. It was thick and shady, a pleasant refuge from the afternoon sun. Rose Sneddon had only just left him, with visible reluctance, to attend to some duty as the daughter of the house. He was somewhat under the spell of her violet eyes and intimate cooing voice. He felt pleasantly exhilarated and in no hurry to join his fellows as he strolled down the long green tunnel. A high clear voice pierced the leafy screen.

"Oh, yes, my dear, *so* conceited I declare he'd swallow any flattery. You should have seen Rose Sneddon ten minutes ago! Talk about a live lion stuffed with straw! This was a lion-cub stuffed with butter. Vain! I know for a fact, my love, he soaks his whiskers in oil for half an hour every night, first one side and then the other."

Revolted by the vulgarity of this speech, which could apply only to himself, James strode away, his mood of complacency completely shattered. At the end of the tunnel he glanced back, but no one was in sight. The vine avenue debouched into a quiet part of the garden, and for the

moment he was in no mood for feminine society. He took one of the winding garden-paths. He thought he saw the flicker of an orange gown through the bushes, but lost it again, then as he rounded a bend he thought something moved ahead of him. Had he been sure that he was not seen he would have turned back, but he feared to be undignified, so he strode on and came upon a young lady in a gown of orange tulle and a little wallflower hat, sitting all alone upon a garden-seat demurely contemplating the works of nature. She did not seem to notice him until he was past, then her voice followed him unexpectedly.

"How rude of you to forget me, James." He turned perforce.

"Come and sit down. I was waiting for you."

"You are Laurel Franklin, aren't you?" he said rather lamely, and sat down.

"Yes. Do you remember Aunt Maud's garden-party ever so long ago?"

"I remember. You made faces."

"I still do." She pulled a sample. The conversation flagged. James thought her stranger than ever.

"How did you escape from the ladies, James?" There was a laughing taunt in her voice that brought the blood to his cheeks and drew him to his feet. She seized his coat-tails.

"Don't go, James. I confess. Don't look so angry or I'll think you really are vain. I didn't say it to anyone, you know."

"But why?"

"I peeped through the leaves and saw you coming, and you looked so pleased and so complacent I couldn't help it."

"What were you doing there?" In two minutes Laurel had driven him back into his teens and bereft him of his manners.

"I was waiting for you. I saw you bidding Rose an eternal farewell, and set off down the grape arbour. I thought I'd run down to the other end and meet you there, but then I peeped. After that I couldn't meet you, you looked so sour, so I hid, and when you took one path I took

another that would meet it and ran all the way. And here I am."

James wondered if she were a mischievous child or an accomplished coquette. He was damned if he'd forgive her either way! Then he caught her eye, felt the absurdity of the situation, and began to laugh.

"It's all right!" she exclaimed, and he thought there was relief in her tones. "I thought you were going to be really angry." She sat up very straight. "They are spoiling you, you know. Don't be taken in by their soft glances—we're not soft really. I could make you fall in love with me without flattering you."

"Could you?" said James, rather aghast.

"If I wanted to."

"Do you?"

"You need lessons. You should have said something pretty then. Come on, it's time we went back."

"Oh, no, not yet." He was beginning, despite himself, to find the situation piquant; his wounded vanity was healing fast.

"It's time to go home. Mamma will be looking for me." They walked along the path in silence.

"I say," he broke out, like the boy he was trying not to be, "when shall I see you again?"

"I don't know," she answered indifferently. "I suppose we'll be invited to the same parties."

"Are you going to the Gipsy Tea on Thursday?"

"I might."

"No, but are you?"

"I'll see. Will you wait for me if I do, and carry my basket?"

"I might," he answered sulkily.

She laughed at him over her shoulder, as if she had trapped him into something. "I wouldn't trouble you."

"Very well, I won't."

She sketched him a little curtsy and was gone.

The thought of Laurel Franklin worried James for days. He could not understand her, and so he went on thinking about her. Of one thing he was certain, he did not like

her. But did she like him? She had mocked him, but then she had sought him out. But was she even mocking him with candour? She had seemed to lose interest in him at the end. It would be amusing to show her that she could not do as she liked with him. He had a good mind to go to the Gipsy Tea after all, just to show her that she had made no impression on him whatever. She was a forward miss, he concluded sententiously, and he would think no more of her. Then he was as acutely aware of her bright, mocking eyes as if he were looking into them again, and knew she would think him absurd. What an unsettling young person! He went to sleep quite resolved that he would not go to the Gipsy Tea. But when morning came his resolution was wavering again. He thought, "Why should I let Laurel Franklin keep me away? I intended to go before I met her, and I shall go." Then he thought, "If I go she'll think I'm going for her, and if I stay away it will just show her." She was not pretty like Rose Sneddon, but Miss Rose was just a little insipid. The name Laurel suited her; it was bitter and full of flight, harsh green leaves of victory, a prize, a symbol. Why did they give the girl such an outlandish name? He would not think of Laurel any more, and he would not go to the Gipsy Tea. This time he burnt his boats before he could change his mind again.

Lionel stared when James announced that he would not go to the Gipsy Tea on Thursday. For once he believed in his brother's superior sophistication: for himself, he would not have missed it for anything. Adela tactlessly asked, "But why, dear?" and he answered nonchalantly, "It'll be a very dull affair. I'd like a quiet evening at home."

Adela was not deceived. She wondered who it was, but did not suspect Laurel.

It was a lovely evening. At five o'clock a flotilla of rowing-boats set off up the Lane Cove, rowing toward the west. The first pink of sunset tinged the water as the boats made their landfall on a shelving grassy bank beloved of picnickers. Once a bark hut had stood there, where an early settler had lived and pushed back the bush for a meagre acre or so of cultivation, but the hut had long ago crumbled

away into the earth and the man who had built it was gone more completely still. Only the ragged strip of grass remained, and beyond the grass an amphitheatre of casuarinas, and beyond them rising ground and a tangle of bush. The place was so utterly silent and tranquil that it rarefied even the jokes of the young gentlemen and the squeals of the young ladies. Here the men built a fire upon stones that may have formed the fireplace of the almost mythical settler, and the girls set out the cold chicken, ham sandwiches, and cakes from the hampers, while the chaperones sat back and watched the pageantry of the sunset. In the clear, colourless, and perfect hour between the setting of the sun and the rising of the moon, they ate their cold collation. The moon came up, red, honey-coloured, silver, the twilight changed to a silver-grey, the river became a path of light, and the trees stood out as if they were etched upon the sky. Chaperones began to talk of night airs and the dew, and the boats went down the river on the ebbing tide. Lionel was very quiet, the night had cast its spell upon him. He was hardly aware now that Laurel was beside him.

"You love this for itself, too, don't you?" she asked, in a low tone.

"Yes," he answered.

He thought then that he knew more about Laurel Franklin than anybody else, that she was not strange as people said, but simple and very true, and that they could be friends.

James passed a miserable evening. He frankly wished he had gone to the tea, and wondered what he had been making a fuss about. The moon called him a fool without mincing matters.

"Laurel Franklin was there," Lionel informed him as soon as he got in, "and she was expecting you. She thought as a matter of fact that you were going to escort her. It was deuced uncivil of you to disappoint her."

"There was no arrangement," said James, and added with surprising bitterness, "No doubt she found some one else."

"Naturally I took your place."

"Very civil of you, I'm sure."

James now felt that he would never see Laurel again, and was profoundly sad. He went to a couple of parties and she was not there. He found the affairs savourless and returned home early, though he could not imagine why he was so restless. He arose in the summer dawn, saddled his horse, and rode out into the quiet world. Riding up the hill bare-headed between the tranquil gardens and the sleeping houses, he felt strangely elated. On the crest he met a breeze. James felt heroical and splendid and young—like a Centaur or a Cyclops or something like that, and while he was thinking this he absent-mindedly turned his horse toward the Franklins' house. As he walked his horse past the house he raised his eyes to the upstairs windows. No one was stirring yet. He imagined Laurel asleep there, and Laurel asleep was touching and unguarded. He could think kindly of Laurel now. He rode on till the rising sun told him he must return.

The next morning he again rose early and rode through the dawn, and the next. He felt the pride of the early bird and of the man who never misses his cold shower in winter. On the fourth morning a horsewoman rode out to meet him from the Franklins' drive.

"Good morning, James," said Laurel, pulling in her horse beside his, as if this were the most natural thing in the world. James's heart did something erratic, and when it righted itself he was thinking that it was scarcely proper to be meeting a young lady when she should have been in bed asleep.

"I've seen you gazing soulfully at Hugo's room the last three mornings, so I thought you should be rewarded."

"I always ride in the morning. I find it invigorating, and the view is very pleasant from here."

"And you just happened to be looking soulful—I see."

"I haven't seen you for over a fortnight," said James inconsequently.

"I have been away. I was to have stayed a month, but I came home at the end of a fortnight."

"Oh!" Did she mean anything by that or did she not? Laurel was not easy to talk to. James prided himself on

his conversation for ladies, but none of it seemed to apply to Laurel. While he was thinking of something to say, she cut in.

"We don't have to talk, do we? I'd rather we didn't, wouldn't you? We don't have to be our ordinary selves at this time of the morning. It's stolen."

"Are you ever not yourself?"

"Oh, yes, often! I'm driven into doing and saying things I don't mean. It just happens out of perversity. I want to experiment with people and I do, though I know it's odious. But I feel good now, my sins haven't got up yet."

She was gay and childlike and knew how to manage her horse. The wind loosened her hair and brought some colour to her cheeks. She seemed as harmless as the little girl at Aunt Maud's party, and it was easy to be friends with her. James wondered why he had let her disturb him. They said good-bye and he rode home. There were no problems in the world.

Every morning, even when it was wet, James rode up the hill and past Laurel's home. Sometimes she came and sometimes she did not. He never asked her if she were coming and she never told him. He supposed it might not always be easy, for surely even Sophia would object to such strange behaviour in her daughter if she knew. The morning rides remained secret, and they were detached from the rest of their lives. They often met at parties, with varying fortunes, but even if they parted bad friends the night before they met as comrades in the morning, nor did the comradeship of the morning temper the quarrels of the evening. James began to dread the winter, when the mornings would be too dark and too cold for riding.

One morning the chill of autumn was in the air; it was a grey, overhanging morning with a hint of rain in the wind. James thought heavily that Laurel would not come to-day, but she was waiting for him when he reached her gate. The ride was mournful, and Laurel drooped in her saddle. James had never seen her sad before. It began to rain very lightly in gusts, so that they had to turn back.

"This is the last time, James."

"Yes," he said gloomily, "it will soon be winter. But we may have a bright spell."

"I won't come again."

He put his hand on her cold hand as it laxly held the bridle.

"Has anything happened?"

She shook her head. "You think things can go on like this for ever, but they can't."

"Why can't they?"

"We're not really simple, James. We are only pretending to be."

"I don't understand you. Has your mamma found out?"

"You are only a schoolboy at heart," she retorted. "All you can think of is being found out."

"I was thinking of your reputation alone," he answered stiffly.

"Oh, James, must you always pretend? Men think they don't have to be honest with women. If you really had this tremendous respect for my reputation you would not take me riding. You would feel a fool, wouldn't you, if people knew you had been going out secretly each morning with that extraordinary Miss Franklin! And when you think I've betrayed the secret of your folly you talk about my reputation!" She had worked herself up into a passion so sudden and so fierce that James was amazed and resentful.

"I did not ask you to come riding; it was entirely your own idea."

"You can be honest when you think it will hurt me."

She cut her horse sharply with her crop; he sprang forward and galloped down the road at a headlong pace. A labourer on his way to work thought she had lost control, and ran shouting into the roadway in a misguided effort to stop the animal. The horse shied and bolted in earnest. James raced unavailingly after her, expecting every moment to see her thrown from the saddle. But Laurel kept her seat, and presently the sight of home calmed the horse and he slackened pace. When James, his face white with fear, caught her up he expected to find her pale and trembling, but she was flushed and exhilarated, and she laughed at his concern.

"Poor James," she mocked, "what a fright you had! How your reputation would have suffered if I had been killed!" and with this parting gibe she rode away.

James could not forgive Laurel because she was not afraid. The accident should have been the solvent of their quarrel. He did not exactly wish she had been hurt, but if she could have fallen weeping and trembling into his arms, how gently he would have forgiven her, how tenderly he would have comforted her! He told himself that she was heartless, flippant, and unwomanly. She had been unjust, and her injustice had destroyed their idyll. The morning rides had been beautiful and precious. He had kept them secret because he had not wanted them defiled by gossip, and she had defiled them herself, had attributed mean motives to him, had mocked their companionship. Had this been only the *dénouement* of a long game? All day long the thought of Laurel came between James and his work. His heart was full of bitterness and questioning. Why had she been so sad? Why should she invite and spurn him almost in the same breath? He would have found tragedy easier to bear than this enigmatic mockery. He was reduced to very simple terms, a handsome boy, nonplussed and wretched.

Days passed and James neither saw nor heard anything of Laurel. At first he declared that he had finished with her, and then began to dread that she had finished with him. He passed from rage to despair. He began to blame himself, to find excuses for her. He persuaded himself that she too was fretting. Then he saw her at a party, and she was very gay. He had not seen her arrive, nor had he seen her once among the dancers, and he was thinking of excusing himself and going home when he saw her. She was dancing with Lionel and he saw her almost for the first time when she was entirely unconscious of his presence. It was the Laurel who had ridden with him in the early morning long ago before they quarrelled, a Laurel whom he thought he alone in all the world had ever seen. She was happy and simple and gay, it was obvious that she and Lionel were old friends. James saw something that he believed was his life shrivel to a cinder among the heartless mirrors and gilding of

the ballroom. He would go now at once, before she saw him. He saw it all now, she had broken with him to go to Lionel—Lionel who stayed at home and stole everything behind his back.

"What's the matter, old man?" asked an acquaintance as he plunged out, but James did not hear him.

Laurel had seen him too. Lionel felt her gasp. "I must see him before he goes," she said, and abruptly left her partner. James was already on the gravel when he heard a flutter behind him. He increased his pace, but her voice followed him on a little breathless note. "James, oh, James!" He did not pause or turn. The breathlessness in her voice made it oddly pathetic and appealing, but he would take no notice, and the footsteps behind him stopped. At the turn of the drive he permitted himself a swift glance back. She stood forlornly in the middle of the path, and, dwarfed by the great bulk of the house behind her, she seemed like a forsaken and disappointed child. James longed to turn back, but he forced himself to go on down the dark drive. He remembered how he had once chased her through another garden, and could remember with a terrible unmanning clarity how he had felt her heart beating under his hands as he pulled her down at last. He could not be angry any longer, could not hate her or pretend any longer that he could do without her. What did his pride matter? It was an infinite relief to give way to his love and to walk on through the icy midnight air as if there were no to-morrow.

It was nearly two o'clock, and he was standing by the entrance gates of the Franklins' house waiting to see Laurel come home. Time dragged on, and he began to wonder if she had returned early. The non-committal face of the house told him nothing. When the carriage did rattle up the hill at three o'clock it came to him as a surprise and set him shaking. He withdrew into the shadow and saw the carriage stop and Franklin hand out his wife and daughter. Laurel stood for a moment drooping with fatigue while something was searched for in the carriage. James made a slight movement, and he saw her start, a minute white handkerchief fluttered out from the folds of her gown and lay

upon the path. It was a message, a flag of truce. In a moment she had been shepherded into the house, and James heard the reverberation of the closing door. James waited, unwilling that it should end here, though all he had to hope for now was to see the light spring up in her windows. As he waited she came out to him swiftly and silently. The moonlight made her face look white and tragic.

"Oh, James!" she said, "why did you run away? I saw your face and I wanted to say I was sorry. I didn't know I could hurt you so much. Don't let me be cruel to you again, James."

He held her in his arms and said unaccustomed tender words. She twisted free. "I can't stay, Mamma will miss me."

"When can I see you again? To-morrow?"

"Sunday," she whispered. "When they are at church. Come here," and she was gone.

For weeks Laurel was kind to James, then one day she was moody and remote.

"What is it?" he asked foolhardily.

"I'm tired."

"Of me?" He was almost fatuous.

"Yes, and of myself—of us."

"My dear Laurel!"

She looked at him from under her brows, her dark Medusa glance that boded ill.

"That's just it—your dear Laurel. It's no use. I can't go on being amiable. I shall go mad if I have to be any one's 'dear Laurel' for the rest of my life. Oh, James, don't be so worthy."

He looked hurt and puzzled.

"You don't understand, do you? You often don't understand me. Lionel understands me much better than you do."

"When do you see Lionel?" The words were out before he could stop them, but Laurel would only laugh, and he left her laughing.

On bright afternoons when James could get away from the store they went riding together. There was a sort of reckless

secrecy about their affair. Laurel fostered the aspect of intrigue, for it amused her to see James doing incongruous things. When she mockingly begged him to be discreet his earnest manœuvres delighted her. One day when he was waiting for her with elaborate casualness in a lonely spot he could hear from the sound of hoofs that she was not alone. He dismounted and drew his horse back among some trees by the roadside, thinking with annoyance that some acquaintance had met her and insisted upon accompanying her, then smiling to think she would probably find some adroit way of ridding herself of the intruder. Laurel's voice broke in on his reflections.

"There you are, James. Why are you hiding yourself away? We began to think you were not coming."

There was nothing to do but to emerge shamefacedly from cover, Laurel and Lionel watching him with amusement. He was bitterly chagrined to think that he had taken a circuitous route and waited half an hour, with the net result that Laurel and Lionel rode together and mocked him at the end. Lionel was not a little amused by his elder brother's very apparent discomfiture.

Sometimes Laurel was remorseful. She would beg him to see her no more, saying, "I'll never make you happy. I can only torment you, it's all I'm good for." When she was in this mood James thought her engaging, gentle, and humble, and at once forgot her provoking ways and set himself with much earnestness to reassure her, till she gazed at him in half-comical helplessness and told him it was on his own head.

II

James, whose ears were sensitive to the name of Franklin, began to hear it more frequently now at the store. For many years there had been open rivalry between Hyde's and Gillam's. To overtake and compete with the older establishment had been the quartermaster's delight and pride. The rivalry had always been without acrimony, and old Hyde and old Gillam had regarded each other with friendship and esteem. With the death of Mr Gillam everything

had changed. The change was partly due to the times. The bountiful fifties when there was plenty for all had gone, and an age of hard and bitter competition and price-cutting had come in. But more was due to the change in personnel. The quartermaster found it hard to understand the trust that old Gillam had placed in his son-in-law. The man was clever, but the quartermaster suspected that he was unscrupulous. In moments of heat he had described him to William as a "manipulator," and often wondered what business was coming to when men of Franklin's type could get to the head of big concerns. Franklin made it plain that a rival was an enemy, and that he would fight. The quartermaster thanked God he was spared to take up the challenge, and threw himself into the business with renewed energy.

The line of North Coast Packets, in which the Hydes had acquired an interest even before the gold-rush, now belonged entirely to the firm, and it had a practical monopoly of the northern trade. The quartermaster was very proud of his fine fleet of ships, and had found it necessary to build new wharves and offices at Wooloomooloo Bay to accommodate them, while the original store in Windmill Street was given up to the overseas trade. He had been anxious to call his last ship the *Adela Hyde*, out of compliment to his daughter-in-law, but William, shocked by the thought of his wife's name in the mouths of common sailors, had with difficulty dissuaded him.

What the Hydes were to the North Coast, the Gillams were to the South. From the wharf at the foot of Erskine Street packets sailed for Eden, Moruya, and Twofold Bay. It had never been the crack line that the northern river-boats were, for old Gillam was not a seaman as the quartermaster always would be at heart, but it had provided a good, trustworthy service. It was only one of a number of ventures in the Gillam quiver, but it was the one destined for the limelight.

In 1865 rumours began to get about concerning the seaworthiness of these South Coast Packets. Franklin lost a boat in an Easter gale. The master of the wrecked boat,

smarting under the disgrace of losing his command, uttered dark hints about the condition of the boat. It was heavily insured, and the insurance company contested the payment. Some unpleasant things were said and worse were hinted, but Franklin won his case and the company had to pay over the money. The master was discredited and dismissed. Franklin could scarcely veil the cynical pleasure he took in his triumph. Then one of the oldest captains in the line, a man old Gillam had trusted, suddenly and without explanation sent in his resignation and came to the quartermaster for a berth.

"It doesn't look healthy," said the quartermaster, with unusual moderation, "but I suppose it is none of my business."

About this time the Hydes sold the old *Hunter River* for still-water trade in one of the rivers, as she was deemed no longer fit for the open sea. She had been strained in a gale, and it would take more than she was worth to make her thoroughly seaworthy. Months later when this trivial incident had slipped from every one's mind, the quartermaster heard that Franklin had bought a new boat. Its previous history was not forthcoming, which was unusual on the waterfront, where boats are discussed much as horses are in racing circles. Having occasion to visit Franklin on business one morning, and finding him out, the quartermaster strolled out into the yard to look at the new boat. She was spick and span in new paint and new brass fittings, but no boat can hide from a seaman under a little paint and brass. The quartermaster recognized Franklin's new boat as his old *Hunter River*. Every workman in the yard knew the old man, and none had the hardihood to question his right to board the new boat. He made a thorough examination. Having sold the boat in the first place, he felt that it was his right to do so, and, as a citizen, that it was his duty. At any rate he had no sense of trespass on board the *Hunter River*. When he returned to the store he was very grave indeed. Discreet inquiries elicited the information that the boat was heavily insured. That there was dishonesty somewhere the quartermaster could not doubt, but, with the

seaman's contempt for the landsman's judgment in things maritime, he thought it possible that Franklin had been cheated and was in honest ignorance of the boat's history and condition. He determined to act on this supposition.

He asked to see Franklin alone. It was a request that could not very well be refused, but Franklin knew that he had inspected the boat, and was fully armed.

"What can I do for you to-day, Mr Hyde?"

"I hope," said the quartermaster, "that I'm going to do something for you."

Franklin raised his eyebrows in a polite sneer. The quartermaster wasted no words, but told him bluntly the history of the boat, that it had been sold as unseaworthy, and in his opinion was unseaworthy still. Franklin showed neither surprise nor indignation. He drew a paper from a drawer beside him and handed it to the quartermaster. It was a certificate of seaworthiness.

"You got this for the insurance company, I suppose?"

"Certainly. I am not a seaman, Mr Hyde. I took the opinion of an expert, and if he assures me that the boat is seaworthy and the insurance company is satisfied, you will forgive me if I prefer their opinion to that of a competitor who comes to my wharves when I am absent and boards my ships without a permit."

"Very well, then, there's no more to be said at present," said the quartermaster, unabashed. "I'll be going now."

Franklin could not forbear a gibe. "Business methods have changed, Mr Hyde. Younger men can keep up with the times."

"Business methods may change," answered the old man, "but business principles do not," and made a good exit.

But his heart was heavy, for this was a bad business. He sent for William—"And James had better come too, for we've made an enemy to-day and the consequences may be far-reaching." It was his way to initiate James into the policy of the business long before he was trusted with the mechanism.

James could only think of the news in terms of Laurel. He was terribly disconcerted by the perfidy of her father,

and he hoped she would never know. But this could not remain a business quarrel. The quartermaster was touched by the personal aspect of the disgrace. The thought that his daughter bought her fal-lals with the money Franklin earned for the firm by such shady methods, and that the name of his son-in-law and of his old rival whom he had liked and respected was in danger, was nauseous to him. That night he sent for Humphrey. He did not explain the visit to the womenfolk, but they felt solemnity and crisis in the air and saw Humphrey go away sobered and thoughtful.

Humphrey told Maud what her father had discovered. Maud did not see that anything very serious had happened, but she was habitually indiscreet and she disliked the Franklins. With a few embellishments to make it more credible she told the tale among her sisters-in-law, who also disliked the Franklins. The story finally reached Sophia herself, and Franklin nearly exploded with rage, the more so as pressure was being brought to bear on him by Humphrey and his brothers-in-law, who were, after all, somewhat in the position of shareholders. He became alarmed for his reputation, because reputation has a commercial value and he could not afford to lose it. The new boat was never put into commission, though Franklin protested his innocence with righteous indignation and a profusion of well-cooked documents. He never forgave the quartermaster his interference, or rather his victory. Meeting him in a secluded spot on the Hill, without witnesses, he permitted himself a few frank and vulgar words, for he rightly judged that, as far as old Hyde was concerned, there was nothing of his reputation left to be saved. The quartermaster ordered Adela to strike the Franklins off her visiting list and never to let one of them enter the house again. He turned to the assembled family. "Do you hear? They are people with whom it is impossible to sit down to meat."

Adela sighed, for life in a small community was full of difficulties.

"We won't let it make any difference with Laurel," Lionel said to James, and that was what James said to Laurel when at last he saw her alone.

"No difference!" she flamed. "*You* will make no difference! Don't you think *I* might make a difference after what has happened, after the insults, the harm your grandfather has done."

James was amazed. He had imagined her abashed and distressed; he had always so carefully dissociated her from her disagreeable parent that he had come at last to endow Laurel with some of his own distaste for the man.

"Dear Laurel," he appealed, "can we not go on as we were and leave the quarrel to others——?"

She cut him short. "Whatever happens, you offer me a piece of sugar. I am in no mood for sugar or for you."

James began to be unhappy in earnest. The barrier between him and his love had no reality for him. He cared no less for her. He felt himself an indissoluble part of his family, but was surprised that she should feel the same. The quarrel, though his mind appraised it, had no reality for him, and the frustration of his love left him mentally unprepared.

For weeks Adela had felt the change in him. She knew that his life had changed its orientation and that his whole character was re-centring about some new interest. She was troubled, but could no more broach his privacy now than she could William's. James was invulnerable, as she had always known he would be. He was so like the handsome boy who had loved her twenty-five years ago that her heart hardened against him, and James inherited the results of the disappointment his father had inflicted upon her but never realized. Adela was a little lonely now. Fanny, embittered and implacable, gave more and more of her time to good works. William was remote, and James subtly and implicitly estranged. Her life was filled by the management of her household, and her social duties, which every one except herself seemed to think important, but they failed to satisfy her unacquisitive but intensely emotional nature. Her happiness was wholly centred in Lionel, and her love for him brought no disappointment. He had grown from childhood to adolescence without any break in the continuity of their love. She feared his music as a rival, for

that was a world she could not enter with him, and if he had possessed a real gift it might have come between them. As it was, his failure to attain the perfection that would have satisfied him brought him back to her. Yet they remained a family held together by the strong will of the quartermaster. Each one was aware of a dual personality, themselves as individuals, and as sons or daughters or grandsons of the quartermaster. It was the measure of his power that he could create a sense of unity centred in himself and fit it upon these divergent souls so that they could never escape.

James felt the tie most closely. He felt it not as a bond, but as a rule to which he must conform, and it seemed as if the perfection of his life depended upon his conformity. He did not have to think this, it was bred in him. As a child he had seen the world in definite linear arrangement; there was God, the Queen, Grandpapa, Papa, and himself. It was the inherent sense of family that was the rock of his distress now. To love Laurel was a miscarriage of destiny, a disloyalty that offended himself. But he did love her, all arguments ended in that. He did not want to, he thought of it as a guilty passion, and then the memory of some sudden sweetness, of a snatched elusive happiness, overwhelmed him.

III

James saw Laurel only at public affairs now. She smiled at him and her eyes were comprehending. He thought she had no heart, but that made no difference. He had a broken feeling inside just as he had felt on the night he had seen Laurel dancing with Lionel, the night they had been reconciled. It was again as if the fabric of his life had given way and he had capitulated to his love. There was a grain of comfort in having reached the bottom. If there was any sacrifice Laurel would accept he was ready to make it.

All day he had been busy at the store, closeted with his grandfather, running out the calculations for an important tender. To ensure against any possible leakage, William or the quartermaster always made up the important tenders

themselves. This was for the victualling of a line of overseas boats, and was very valuable. All contracts were valuable now, for, though trade was brisk, competition was keen and the firms had to handle larger volumes of business to keep up their profits. This particular tender closed next day, and the figures were complete. In the morning he would write the letter and his grandfather would sign it. James ached with the fatigue and strain of keeping his mind fixed on work that belonged to a world he had abandoned.

When he reached home there was a note awaiting him. He read it fifty times.

If you still want to see me, I shall be at home to-night,

There was no signature.

The servant who answered the Franklins' bell evidently had special instructions, for James was shown upstairs to a small sitting-room which served as a study or den for the boys when they were home from school. It was a plain, familiar, unpretentious room, with a litter of intimate trifles on the tables and chairs. James began to think he had been brought here by mistake, when a door on the far side opened and Laurel came swiftly in. She shut the door and stood with her back to it. James had not seen her for days, and she always seemed more vivid than his thought of her had been. He could not tell from her face what her mood was.

She showed no hesitancy. "This can't go on, James. You mustn't follow me about and make us both ridiculous. I scarcely dare to go to a party. People are probably talking already."

"You don't care what people say?"

"I do care about being made ridiculous."

"You used to care for me, Laurel. How can this silly quarrel change that? I've done nothing."

She answered sadly, "I belong to my people and you to yours."

"Marry me, Laurel, and then they could not part us."

"Your grandfather would never forgive you."

"Oh, yes," said James, without conviction.

"And you belong to your family, and as you got older you would belong to them more and more." Her voice was sad, it pierced his heart. James knelt by her and put his arms about her.

"Laurel darling, I belong only to you."

"Don't," she whispered, "please don't. We have to think. We mustn't be foolish now."

"Marry me, dear."

"I'm afraid, James, I should want everything. I'd never share you."

"I'd give you everything."

"No," she said, her voice hardening to a sort of challenge. "You would not give me everything. You would not give me your honour, and I should want even that."

"You are tormenting me, Laurel. Why do you raise these ridiculous points. There is only you."

"Would you even give me a secret that wasn't yours?"

"Yes," he muttered, sinking his head on his hands. "Yes, anything."

There was a pause, and then the question followed with a curious inconsequence.

"Will you tell me what your grandfather is tendering for the Red Funnel contract?"

James almost laughed. He saw the figures of the tender painted across his eyelids, and drawing a sheet of paper that was lying on the table toward him, he copied them upon it. Somewhere in the house a door banged.

Laurel went to the door and listened. "Papa has come home," she said. "You can't stay here, James. As soon as he goes into his study you must slip out."

He gave her the paper and she folded it in her hands without looking at it. "Now do you believe I would give you anything?"

"Yes," she said, with an enigmatic smile. "Yes, I believe now. You must go, James, quickly."

"When shall I see you again?"

"I don't know, soon—I will make an opportunity. Only go now."

He went down the great stairway, and the servant who had let him in opened the door in silence and he went out.

Laurel went along the passage to her father's study and tapped on the door.

"Come in," he shouted, and, "What's this?" as she handed him a folded slip of paper.

"It's the Hydes' tender for the Red Funnel contract. I said I could get it."

He looked from the paper to her. "By God, you're a clever little vixen! How did you do it?"

"Oh!" she said wearily, "I warned him, and then I asked him straight out."

"You did, eh? I'm much obliged, my dear. I'll give you a bonus if I pull off the contract."

"No," she cried, with sudden passion.

"Oh, very well, don't get excited."

Laurel refused the paternal embrace, and leaving him without another word dragged herself upstairs to her room as if utterly weary.

IV

Realization came to James in the night. It came gradually unfolding leaf by leaf as his emotions subsided. By morning he had only a slender hope left. He would go to Laurel and ask her for the paper back. It was still possible that she had heard of the contract by chance and had only demanded the figures to satisfy her pride. His reason told him that this was unlikely, but he clung despairingly to the thread of hope through the long and agonizing night. As early as he dared he stood upon the Franklins' doorstep. A forbidding servant tried to turn him away.

"Miss Laurel is not down yet," he kept repeating.

"Tell her that I am here and that the matter is urgent."

The servant conferred with another, concluded at last that James's business might be urgent, and one of them went slowly upstairs with the message. After what seemed an eternity Laurel came down, a blue dressing-gown trimmed with white fur wrapped round her slender body. She looked

white and exhausted. James would have burst out with his request before the servants, but she drew him into one of the muffled and shuttered reception-rooms and closed the door.

"I came down because I feared you would make a scene. What is it?"

"The paper, Laurel, give it back to me—I was mad."

She shook her head. "You were mad, but it's too late now."

"You mean—your father?"

She nodded. James turned wildly to the door.

"Where is he?"

"It's no good. You know it wouldn't be any use."

He turned on her in a fury. "You betrayed me—you stole the secret from me when I was soft with love of you."

"Listen to me," she cried, with a passion equal to his own. "I'm not ashamed of what I did. It was perfectly fair. Your grandfather injured my father: he attacked his honour and lost him reputation and money. I have only made you pay it back with your credit and money. I warned you, I told you that you could not separate me from my family. It's quite fair now between families. Do you understand?"

"Yes," he said, looking at her stupidly. "Yes, it is quite plain now."

He went away. He knew now that there was a pain that bit deeper than love, and it was disgrace. Seven days went by. Each day was a huge distorted mass of time casting a grotesque shadow upon eternity. James was utterly wretched. He thought that he would confess to his grandfather, to his father, to anyone who would listen, but he was afraid, not of their anger or their reproaches but of something that would be broken for ever the moment he spoke. He felt that the knowledge of his treachery would sever the quartermaster's assurance, by which and under which they all lived. If only, he cried a thousand times, if only the disgrace could be all mine, if I could bear my own pain and my own punishment!

On the seventh day he went into the office and saw the quartermaster's rueful face.

"We've lost that Red Funnel contract, James; Franklin's got it. I don't know how he beat our figure. He couldn't beat it. He's just cut out his profits altogether. It's a big disappointment."

James muttered something. He knew now that he had hoped for a miracle. The loss of this gleam of hope, which he had not known till now existed, left his heart in darkness. He thought, "To-night I shall tell Papa." That seemed fixed and certain at last. In the meantime he could not endure the store. He left his work and went home. "Papa will think nothing of that when he hears what I have to tell him to-night," he thought. He noticed that the sky was dark and stormy and that a wind was springing up. A pulse in his brain beat like a tiny drum in response to the gathering storm.

Firenze was wrapped in noonday quiet. James thought what a happy house it was, and kind. Adela was alone. She rang for lunch to be brought him on a tray, and he ate it sitting with her by the fire. Mother and son were seldom alone together now. She had long since given up asking him questions about himself, and she talked to him now as if he were some friend who had come to sit with her rather than as her son whom she knew to be in trouble. With every moment James felt quieter and happier. Tragedy was somehow incongruous in this quiet room. He thought, "I have sinned, I have repented, and I shall be forgiven." He could trust his father and his grandfather to forgive him. It was a hard, strange notion that he had had, that what he had done would break the bonds that held him to his family. They could never desert him who was so much more than their flesh. He looked at his mother, who was still beautiful, with her smooth open brow and her shining hair. She looked so kind, and he thought with almost a pang that he had never trusted her enough. He would tell her now, and she would help him. It would be easier than to tell the others.

"Mamma!"

"Yes, dear?" She raised her eyes and looked at him, waiting. It was unexpectedly hard.

"Mamma——" There were quick steps in the passage, and Adela's eyes escaped him. She was looking toward the door.

"Lionel has come home early," she said. "I wonder if he has had his lunch."

"Mamma," he began desperately, "I must——" Lionel stood in the doorway.

James went out into the garden, where the first drops of rain were falling. The gusty wind excited him. His mood had hardened and cleared. The thought was growing in his mind that he need not confess at all, that, now the harm was done, confession would only make it immortal. His grandfather would never suspect him of treachery, and he would atone by a life of devotion and rectitude. Why should it be allowed to darken his life, to darken all their lives? He wanted to rush away from the whole business, to pile days and miles and thoughts between him and it. It filled him now with nausea rather than shame. He wanted only to be rid of it, to bury it quickly. Suddenly full of life, he could not remain idle. The wind called to him, and he ran down the long, sloping garden to take out his boat. He felt in his imagination the exhilaration of driving before the storm, the joy of the wind, and the stinging cleanness of the rain.

Lionel sat with his mother by the fire. When she looked at him she smiled, and he smiled back at her.

"Why did James come home early?" Lionel asked.

"I don't know," she answered. "I think he is worried about something."

"Laurel Franklin probably. She hasn't spoken to him since the quarrel as far as I know."

Adela raised her brows. "It is just as well, then."

"I like Laurel. She has ideas."

"She is a strange girl, I have never understood her. She would be a good friend, but hard to love."

"She did seem to lead poor old James a dance. He wanted to love her without troubling to understand her."

They smiled at one another again. Lionel got up to draw the curtains, and stood a moment looking over the river.

"Some fool has taken a sailing-boat out in the storm," he said.

Adela rose and stood beside him, and they watched the little triangle of white sail tossing on the dark water. They went back to the fire.

At six o'clock, searching for his brother, Lionel brought back the news that the skiff was gone. At seven there seemed nothing to do but to sit down to dinner. The quartermaster took a robust view—the boy could manage his boat, he was a strong swimmer, and bless my soul! he wasn't ten years old. William was annoyed. He believed in a time for everything, and he said so. Adela was nervous, though the idea of anything happening to James did seem ridiculous. At a quarter to eight a manservant in the Franklin livery brought a letter for the quartermaster. The old man stood with it in his hand while he looked out of the window. The storm was over, and it was calm and cold.

"He's all right now, wherever he is," he said as he stumped away to his study with the unopened letter in his hand.

Lionel said, "Would you like a little music, Mamma?" and she said, "Yes, dear, it would be very nice."

Then the bell rang, and there was a commotion in the hall. Adela half rose, but William and Fanny had gone. The cold wind from the open door swirled through the house. Some one screamed. Fanny held Adela back at the door.

"Don't go yet. There has been an accident—James!"

She could see a man in oilskins. Lionel was beside her holding her arm.

The study door at the end of the hall burst open. They heard the quartermaster's voice as they had not heard it for years, raised in a bellow of anger.

"Is that James?"

The little crowd fell back, and the quartermaster saw

James lying where they had laid the shutter down upon the floor. He looked from the slowly gathering pool upon the floor to the faces of the men, to William. He stood there for a moment, an old square man with a thick neck and a red face, and his features worked strangely with something more animal than grief. Then he pitched suddenly forward on his face.

CHAPTER XII

FIVE YEARS

THE night seemed as if it would never end, while they divided their attention between the living and the dead, for the quartermaster still lived though his life hung in the balance. He had had a stroke, brought on by shock, and that was not surprising, the doctor said, in a man of his full habit. He was not conscious. The heart was making a gallant struggle for life, but the mind and the will were gone. The quartermaster had deserted his family in its bitterest hour. Fanny raised the candles for the hundredth time to look in his face. There was nothing to betray his illness but a slight distortion of the mouth, yet he bore an air of futility and helplessness, the big hands upon the counterpane were the weakest things she had ever seen. "Papa, where are you?" her heart cried out again and again. His high courage, his iron will, and his magnificent vitality had blown out like a candle-flame, and Fanny knew as little where it had gone. Tragedy and mystery and the long night.

Adela sat alone in her bedroom in the dim light of two candles. The room seemed very large, much too large for their shrunken lives. She had helped to put the quartermaster to bed, to chafe his limbs and pack him in hot-water bottles; she had opened his hand and taken from it the crumpled paper he had been holding when he fell. She had brought it in to give to William later in case it was important. She had wanted to keep watch with Fanny, but she was the bereaved mother and must think of nothing but her grief. She was thinking of it now as she sat waiting for William. William had been wonderful, he had even remembered to be gentle to her, to say the right things to

ıer, but the thought of his stricken face was terrible. She elt that her grief was coming to her not directly, but through Villiam. She longed to help and comfort him, but no one ould do that yet. The magnitude of his grief frightened ıer, for it was greater than her own. She could not pray r weep, could only sit there cold and stiff, remembering hings—a long procession of memories winding through her nind without her volition. She remembered how James had eemed to belong to his father more than to her when he vas a baby, how she had thought him an alien, how she had ffered him to the God of bargains in exchange for Lionel. She lived again his difficult childhood, his estranged adolesence, his short and troubled manhood, and her memories rought her to that very day when he had wanted to tell ıer something and she had not listened. There was remorse nd frustration in her grief. She had no right to a mother's rief, she who had never possessed her son.

In the emptiness of the night Adela opened and smoothed ut the paper she had taken from the quartermaster's hand. t seemed to be an ordinary business communication, somehing about an invoice for goods going south to-morrow, ut it was signed Richard Franklin and at the bottom there vas a postscript.

> Since one good turn deserves another, I would warn you that there is a leakage in your office. When making up your tenders you would do well to keep an eye on Master James.
>
> R.F.

Adela read the words again and again. It was evident hat they had a sinister meaning though it was not imme-iately apparent to her. Slowly she fitted it together. The good turn' was the unwelcome information the quarter-ıaster had given him about the *Hunter River* on the sup-osition that he was ignorant. There had evidently been a eakage of information at the store, and she could guess the hannel—James, Laurel, Franklin. James had been ashamed nd unhappy and frightened. He had wanted that day to ell her his trouble, but she had not listened, and he had gone way to his death. Franklin, not content with getting the

information, had betrayed James to his grandfather to satisfy his grudge. She remembered the quartermaster's voice raised in anger. "Is that James?" It had been two shocks and not one that had brought the old man down. She saw the outline of tragedy, though she could not know the details. James's death was no longer a crude and inconsequent tragedy, but the climax of a long and bitter tale of misfortune. She could see it now as the unintended result of all that had gone before. It had happened before her eyes, and she had not known, she had not helped him. James had not been invulnerable after all. All the time she had been thinking that, he had been needing her. She was shaken by the onset of a terrible pity. The paper fluttered from her fingers, and her head fell forward on the scrolled and wreathed mahogany table. Katie found her so, and, shedding many tears herself, strove to comfort her, and at last undressed her and put her to bed utterly exhausted. Adela's mind rallied. She knew there was something she must do before she let herself go. Wildly she looked round for Franklin's letter. This was something she could do for William. It was lying, a white patch, on the carpet. She slipped out of bed, and picking it up touched it to the candle-flame, and in a moment it was gone. Adela fell into a coma of exhaustion, and another day came between James and life.

II

A maid came hesitatingly into the room where Adela sat. She scarcely knew how to approach the newly bereaved. Adela was seeing no one.

"Miss Franklin is downstairs, ma'am. She says she must see you. She won't go, ma'am, though I've done all I can." Adela said, "Show her up, Amy," and brought to naught the maid's pious efforts. She knew now that she had been expecting Laurel to come, that she was sitting here waiting for her.

Laurel in her gown of mignonette-green was like a ghost in this shaded room; only, her pallor was like a white fire. Adela thought, "She is incapable of weakness, but not of

suffering." She knew what Laurel had come to ask, but would not help her.

Laurel was speaking. "Forgive me, but I must know about James. Was it an accident or did he kill himself?"

The words shocked the quiet room. It was as if Laurel had struck herself, and, lifting her face against the blow, waited for Adela's answer.

"He took his skiff out in the storm. I saw him go down the river with the wind behind him, but I did not know it was he. He went down the river and crossed the harbour. There was a high sea running when he came opposite the heads, and it drove him too close to Middle Head. The surf caught him and threw his boat upon the rocks. Several people saw it happen, but it was difficult to send help. He made a strong fight, and was very nearly saved, but a wave threw him against the rocks, stunning him, and he was drowned."

As the quiet, almost monotonous voice ceased Laurel drew a sharp breath. Adela raised her head and looked at her.

"You did not kill him, you only disgraced him," she said, with a bitterness that seemed strange even to herself, so exhausted and quiet had she been. She wondered if she were so bitter, or did she want to be cruel to the strong brought down?

"He told you, then?"

"No, but your father wrote to Mr Hyde. The letter was in his hand when they brought James home."

She had not known; that had stricken her. Her hand went to her heart. She said nothing, there was nothing to say. She was going, but Adela must know something first.

"Laurel, did you love him?"

And Laurel answered, wounding them both with the truth:

"I don't know."

Adela could think, now that she was alone again; there was nothing to do but think. She did not know if she had ever loved her son, and now he was dead. Laurel had not loved him either. He had seemed so strong and so fortunate, he had had so much, but he had not been able to make them love him, and he had wanted it so much. Even now

it was pity and not love that caught at her heart. However she might grieve for James, the core of her life was still safe, for she had Lionel. At last, after all these years, she possessed James, she had his secret and looked upon his weakness. He no longer hid from her—but then he was dead.

III

Coming home against the wind at dusk, Adela paused at the top of the hill. It plunged away from her feet down into the darkness and the river. It made her afraid, and the wind frightened her too. They were only outside things, but they beat upon her mind because she was so tired. Underneath, hidden in her heart, there was a spark that would grow into a steady light. She could not be happy yet, not for a very long time, perhaps, but some day she would be. It was as if she brought home something warm under her cloak—it was the quiet heart.

Adela was coming home from seeing Richard Franklin. It had been an ordeal, but it was over. The anticipation had been worse than the thing itself. She had come hurrying up this hill, wrapped in her black mantle, and from the top she had seen the jagged line of a windy August sunset like a red wound in the sky. Then in a moment, while she was still fumbling for her courage in the voluminous black draperies of a nightmare, she had been shown into Franklin's study. This man had been her guest and her host; she had never liked him, but before the quarrel he had been as it were sealed up in a sort of gelatinous envelope of conventionality. Now that was all torn away. Even his features seemed more strongly marked—the protruding eyes, the heavy jaw, the deep lines that his smile had left—only you felt he had smiled at unpleasant things.

Adela had pressed her hands tightly together and had said what she had come to say. She had begged him to keep the secret of James's treachery, and he had promised. After all, he had given up nothing, he had had the bitterest revenge the heart could desire, he had brought down his enemy. But Adela had been afraid that he would speak to

William, perhaps out of remorse, or refer in some way to the letter, so she had humbled her pride and gone to him. Now it was all over, and she was at peace. At last there had been something that only she could do for James, and she had done it. She was glad that it had been difficult, that it had humbled her, for there was more efficacy in it that way. She had served the invulnerable Hydes, and that they would never know did not matter at all. She could set her heart on Lionel now without the thought of James coming between them. She hurried down the hill hilding her black mantle close about her, a tiny black-clad figure in the immensity of the dusk. Firenze was kind and welcoming, and Amy had lit the fire in her sitting-room.

IV

When James was buried and all the letters of condolence had been received and answered there was nothing to do but to take up their lives again. It was as if they had all been dead—not insentient, but dead, thrown clear of life. Looking back on it, the old life before the tragedy seemed enamelled in bright colours. It looked now far happier and much smoother than it had been. It had worn that air of immortality that a sunny afternoon wears. There had seemed no reason why anything should ever change. No one had seemed to grow any older except the boys, and to grow older for them was still a happy thing. Now they began to live again in a different key. Fanny was angular in her black, and anyone could see that some day Adela would be a little old lady in a grey silk gown.

For Lionel everything was changed. He had been reading, not very seriously, for the Law, but now he must go into the business, for no matter what happened the business must go on. It was inevitable, and Lionel himself was the last to question it. It was evident that William entertained no very high hopes of his younger son's ability, and Lionel sometimes wondered if, under his unvarying cold manner, his father nursed a grudge against him as a supplanter. Every night Lionel came home tired, and

often discouraged. The burden of being the only grandson was heavy upon him. His entry into the buisness was very different from that of James; the store itself was different now that the quartermaster had gone.

The quartermaster still lay helpless upon his bed. He had not moved or spoken since the night of his seizure, and the whole house waited. It was like waiting in the dark for the dawn, sure at first that it must come, holding your breath in immediate expectation, and then with the fear, dragging at the foundations of life, that there never would be another dawn. No one, not even the doctors with their studied omniscience, knew whether he was conscious under his paralysis. It was a terrible mystery in their midst. There was nothing to do but to watch, and the whole house watched and listened. The task of nursing was beyond even Fanny; it was a nightmare every time the old man had to be lifted. A manservant was engaged to take care of him, a sombre man with a pale oblong face and the air of having always lived among deaf mutes. Whenever Fanny or Adela entered the room they looked about sharply for some sign of neglect, but they never found any.

Every morning at eleven the doctor came. It was the crisis of the day, and every day was the same. Fanny conducted the doctor to the sick-room—through the hall, past the white-and-gold doors of the reception-rooms that had the air now of being shut like sulky mouths upon the dust sheets and desolation behind them, up the stairs through the bar of sunlight from the landing window which had the bloom of gold-dust after the still, clear light of the hall below, to the upper hall, and along the corridor to the quartermaster's door with its white china handle. The room was always the same, too. It was like an echo of its china door-knob, smooth and cool under the palm. The room was high, light, and airy, the voluminous starched white valance of the bed held blue shadows, there were flowers in a white-and-yellow bowl on the bureau, and a basin and pitcher in willow pattern stood on a table with folded napkin and chaste white soap, ready for the doctor. The manservant, in neat black, with his oblong of pale face

composed to look like part of the furniture, waited at attention near the head of the bed. There was in the room a sort of perfection which became almost a fetish. It was all they could do now for him, but if he could have so much as opened his eyes the whole atmosphere of that precise room would have been shattered. Every day as he entered the room the doctor abandoned the weather, which was suitable to the stairs but frivolous here, and asked, "How is our patient to-day?" And every day Fanny answered, "Just the same, I am afraid, Doctor." Every day after the examination he announced, "No change to-day, Miss Hyde," and Fanny conducted him back to the world, down the stairs, through the sunbeam, and past the white-and-gold doors.

Each afternoon Adela sat with the quartermaster while the manservant went out. She sat by the window that looked out over the remote courtyard and down the path, now almost a tunnel so overgrown was it with trees, that led to the coach-house. She could not give her mind to her sewing or her book, because of her thoughts, and because the quartermaster came between her and whatever she tried to do. His influence had been implicit in her life as in all their lives, now it became explicit. The mystery of his condition loomed over her. They were bound together by the secret that they shared. They were more intimate now than in what Adela was beginning to think of as the quartermaster's lifetime. It was as if he could not desert them, as if some last thread of his will held when all else was dead. Adela wondered, till the thought became a torment, if his paralysis were only of the body, if his mind alive and clear were a prisoner beating vainly to be free. She thought of him as of some one at the bottom of a well, calling for help when there was no one to hear, or as of something still living frozen in a block of ice. The picture grew in her mind. She tortured herself with the image of his sufferings, his grief for his grandson dead, his remorse that he should have greeted the dead with anger and bitterness, his impotent longing to protect and vindicate his grandson, perhaps too the dark shape that had visited Laurel—the suspicion that

the boy had killed himself. She tried to break through, to reassure him. Leaning over him till her locket on its slender gold chain lay upon his breast, she spoke to him slowly and clearly.

"Papa," she said, "I know too. I read the letter and then I destroyed it. The others don't know. William and Fanny think he is perfect, they always will. We have been able to leave them that. You mustn't think too hardly of him, dear Papa. He loved Laurel and his love was unhappy. He made a poor bargain, for she didn't love him even when he gave her everything. He suffered, Papa; he suffered terribly, and I believe he was going to confess—he tried to tell me the day he was drowned. I did not love him enough when he was alive; I did not think he wanted it. So let me do this for him now he is dead: let us wipe the stain from his memory and forget it. He was unhappy, but he did not want to die, he fought for his life and was nearly saved. Can you hear me?"

Her own voice in that silent room frightened Adela. She was trembling, shaken with an agony of desire to break through. She hung over him breathless, waiting for a sign that he had heard, a variation in his breathing, anything however slight that she could interpret as a signal. But there was nothing. Adela was strangely, incontinently frightened. As soon as the valet came she fled downstairs, and walked in the garden under a wide, colourless sky till she was calm. Till the end of her life she remembered that afternoon. Vague and pale and large, even the garden was robbed of its quality. The sun was hot and the wind cool, so that walking hatless with a troubled mind it was as if she had a fever; that the world was a gigantic basin in which she, a small black crawling thing, floundered in vain.

In the evenings William sat with the quartermaster. The manservant went down to the servants' hall and became, presumably, a human being. William sat by the bed, erect, with his hands on his knees. Now and again he cleared his throat as if he were going to speak, but he said nothing. He was thinking of his son. It was a relief to him to let his thoughts flow, like tears, like blood from a mortal wound.

All day he held back his mind from its grief, and forced it to the business, but it ran underground, a bitter, salt stream, sterilizing his life. His grief was a peculiar grief. He saw the sacred pattern of his life broken, and broken in casual, reasonless cruelty. He had lived carefully, with rectitude and caution; he had seemed secure in the good life, but it had availed nothing. James was dead. William no longer filled the shell of his life, he was shrunken and changed, but the shell went on like an automaton. Years of minor disciplines had secured him this refuge. All through the trouble he had done everything needful without faltering. He had shown no open raw wound of grief. After years of bitterness Fanny was reconciled to him by his fortitude. She thought, pressing her hand against the hard, bitter lump in her breast: "William and I are the same. We go the hardest way, and we endure; but he is stronger than I." Their blood brought them back to one another, and there was only the fact, but no word of reconciliation. When Adela went to comfort William he comforted her. He remembered to be very gentle with her, for she had lost her son. But he had lost James his heir, and that was a grief he could not share with any woman. If only he could have wept with her, if they could have clung together equally helpless before so great a sorrow, Adela's heart was softened to love him again; but William remained himself. Only with the quartermaster could he share his grief. Now that the old man could not stir or speak the surface differences that had so often come between father and son were gone, the barriers between them were down. William did not feel he had to protect himself against his father. Here by his bedside he could think. It was scarcely a process of thought; rather, he let realization well up till it filled his heart.

At half-past nine the patient was composed for the night, and William came slowly downstairs. The manservant made up his bed upon the couch, and lit the night-light. It burned as dimly and as steadily as the life it watched.

Thus the quartermaster still ruled at Firenze, and the routine of the whole house revolved about him. There was in all the Hydes a deep and unyielding loyalty. It was

important to them that in his helplessness the quartermaster should have all that was due to the head of the house, that his illness should not be made an excuse for any lessening of respect. For two years Adela neither accepted nor issued any invitations. For two years hope dwindled, but even then no one believed they would never speak with the quartermaster again. Only they no longer looked toward his recovery with any hope. They clung to the thought that at the last there would be a flicker.

But at the end there was nothing. Adela woke in an obscure hour of the night to low, insistent knocking. She heard the valet speaking in a low, hurried voice, and William answering in his normal tone:

"I shall stay with Mr Hyde while you go for the doctor."

As by magic the whole house knew that the change had come. Adela dressed hastily and followed William to the quartermaster's room. Fanny was there, immobile by the bedside, and Katie, oddly bundled into her clothes, was on her way downstairs to make tea for them all. The doctor came. He stood beside the bed through illimitable ages holding the quartermaster's wrist. Under his finger the pulse fluctuated and fell away. He said, "It is a matter of minutes." William stood at the head of the bed, and Fanny stood beside him. Their calm was almost more than Adela could bear.

William said, "Lionel should be here," and turned to a servant who hovered near the door, but Adela forestalled him and went herself to bring the boy. She had to wake him out of deep sleep, and see his face change from a warm bewilderment to shrinking apprehension. Outside the quartermaster's door she put her arms about him.

"Do not be afraid, my darling, there is nothing terrible. He is slipping away in his sleep."

Together they entered the death-chamber. William and Fanny made room for Lionel by the bed, because he was the grandson. He stood holding his mother's hand tightly in the folds of her gown. They waited listening to the stertorous, uncertain breathing, watching the changed face. The night ebbed, great waves of time went past them into

eternity. The breathing stopped, went on again, faltered. Their hearts said "Now!" and stiffened against the crisis. The doctor said, "He has gone," and laid the great hand back on the dead breast.

The waiting was over, and now there was nothing. The family fell apart, and the doctor ceased to be a high priest and became a little stout man in need of a shave. For two years they had suffered this loss, and now there was no more to feel. Adela raised her blind and looked down upon a dawn of surpassing innocence. "So this is death!" she thought, and drew down the blind again, against the happy light of day.

V

James Hyde was buried with pomp, and mourned with all the solemnity with which the Victorian imagination could clothe death. His long illness, even more than the terrible calamity in which it had begun, had completely cut the thread of social life at Firenze. They had been torn suddenly away from their normal life, and now that the long strain was over it was impossible to get back. Firenze remained a house of mourning.

Adela longed to be happy again, because she longed for Lionel to be happy, and she saw him being robbed of his youth. His delicacy and secluded upbringing had made Lionel quiet and sensitive. The havoc that his brother's death had wrought in his life, the uncongenial work at the store—above all, his knowledge that his father looked upon him almost as a supplanter, had undermined his self-confidence. The years of eclipse while his grandfather lay ill, and the mourning that followed his death, cut the boy off from the society of the Hill. He lost his taste for society, and turned more and more to his mother and his music. He lost, too, Laurel Franklin's friendship, and it was a thing he had valued. He did not know how he came to lose it, but the family was stronger than he. Though ignorant of James's treachery and the part Laurel had played in it, he became aware that the friendship was impossible. It melted in his hand like a snowflake. He felt that he had no life

of his own left. Because he was the second son and delicate, family considerations had interfered very little with his boyhood. But now in a month, in a week, his whole life was engulfed. His spirit was driven into secret channels while his mind and will submitted. He knew that in the family and in the business he could never be anything but the second best, and the knowledge drained him. James living had not overshadowed him as much as James dead. He had felt no rivalry while his brother lived, because he had never competed. Now that James was dead Lionel, forced into his place, suffered the bitterness of comparison. No matter what he did, he could never hope to eclipse James. He knew his position to be hopeless who competed with the beloved dead.

Adela understood all this. She knew that every day he was made more completely hers. She felt a fierce, unacknowledged joy in this, but side by side with her joy grew anger against William, who underrated his son, against the Hyde tradition that had laid its too heavy hand upon his youth. She tried to talk to William. It was some months after the quartermaster's death, and Lionel's coming of age was at hand.

"William," she said, "Lionel will soon be twenty-one. Do you not think we should celebrate the occasion in some way? Just a dinner, perhaps, as we are still in mourning." She paused, mysteriously abashed.

"I admit, my dear, I am in no mood for gaiety, but of course if you have set your heart on it I will not prevent your doing as you wish. I should not have thought you would care for that sort of thing now."

She flushed at the reproach in his tone, the weary, gentle reproach that was so hard to meet.

"It is not for myself, William, but you forget Lionel is young, and surely his coming of age is a matter for rejoicing, even now."

"Yes, yes, youth is selfish, youth easily forgets!"

"It will not make us any happier to ruin Lionel's life."

"Ruin! My dear Adela, you exaggerate. Will Lionel's

life be ruined if he forgoes some celebration for his birthday? His life is far from ruined, he has as good prospects as any young man in Sydney."

"I wish I had not mentioned the party. It is immaterial," said Adela, in a low voice. "He does not expect or even want it very much; but, William, can we not live a normal life again for his sake? Can you not see that he is changed, grown so sad and quiet? And he is only a boy. If you let his twenty-first birthday pass people will think you undervalue your son."

She could not mention James, but he was in both their minds. Adela knew that she was being cruel.

"Is all this necessary, Adela?"

"Some one must think of Lionel. How is he getting on at the store?"

Adela tried to hide her anxiety; to be over-eager was not the way to learn anything from William. But she was very anxious. Lionel spoke little of his work to her, he seemed eager to escape from it, and to her his silence was significant.

"He is learning, but I fear he has little business instinct."

"You have no fault to find with him?"

"No, no, my dear, I am sure he does his best. His education is against him, of course, and he has no idea of handling men."

Adela felt a sudden flush of anger.

"But you can trust him? You know your business secrets would be safe with him?"

She was too eager now. William looked at her in surprise.

"Naturally I trust my son. The question does not arise."

Adela recoiled from the temptation that had almost possessed her. It made her suddenly gentle toward William, whom a moment before she had come near to hating.

"You are very tired, William?" His face was grey, and she noticed with a shock that his features were sharpened almost to emaciation.

"Yes," he said. "I am very tired."

"Could you not rest? Is there no one you can trust at the store?"

"It is not a question of trust, my love. I only do my duty."

"Your duty, William?"

"My duty to the business."

"And have you no duty to yourself—or to us?"

His weariness was like a burden on his shoulders. He said, but gently: "Our ideas of duty are different. Pray let me do mine as I conceive it."

There was nothing more to say. Sitting dumbly, with the intolerable pressure in her throat of the tears she was now too wise to shed, Adela reflected that she had come away from this encounter as from every other, with nothing. Nothing was settled, and Lionel was not benefited. William was hard; even suffering had not brought them closer together. Adela knew that nothing would now, but she had her solace.

"Lionel and I can live for one another, and we will be happy without him."

It was only in flashes, when some strong emotion pierced the hard shell of custom, that Adela realized how William had changed, but others saw it. Fanny said to him brusquely:

"If you don't take a rest, William, you will be ill, and then you will have to take one."

He answered heavily, "It is not a rest I need, Fanny."

It was like a confidence, and she said no more.

The quartermaster's death had been a shock to William despite the long preparation. It rent the fabric of his life. Long ago, when James was born, he had felt a deep comforting sense that he was safe, that he was woven into the pattern of life with his father behind him and his son before. Now he felt himself ruthlessly torn out. The regular order was broken, and he was isolated and betrayed. A senseless cruelty had laid waste his life, and his narrow conventional spirit had no resources from which to re-create itself. He had relied on his father even while he lay dumb and helpless. The old man's death liberated the greater grief that he had for his dead son.

William entered upon a sort of nightmare from which time brought no awakening. His household moved about

him but touched only the fringe of his isolation. In the years that followed his father's death, concentration on his work became more and more of an effort, but every instinct warned him that he must cling to it as the only solid ground in a shifting world. He spent longer hours at the store in Windmill Street or at the office at Wooloomooloo Bay, endeavouring to supervise every detail. He had always been an exacting master, but a just one; now he was a martinet. He had been respected and trusted, but neither feared nor loved; now he was both feared and pitied. He was kind and painstaking with Lionel, training him carefully, showing no impatience, but their association in the business was a severe strain on them both. To William, it meant the constant reminder of his loss, the exacerbation of an open wound; to Lionel, the constant, galling consciousness of a false position. This was not his; James had been robbed of it for him. The work that should have been a bond between father and son only held them more rigidly apart. William would never again allow anyone to enter his heart.

Soon physical pain added its whip to his overwrought nerves. His pain of body and his distress of mind were so much one that he could hardly distinguish them. His instinct was to repress the pain, and he guarded the secret of his weakness like a hidden treasure. Once, wondering why he did not come upstairs, Adela rose from her bed and went to look for him. She found him leaning against the newel-post of the stairs, his face grey and glistening with sweat, the candle in his hand guttering heedlessly on to the carpet. Alarmed, she brought him brandy and helped him to a chair. He smiled at her stiffly, and said in the ghost of his normal voice:

"It is nothing—only a spasm. I am recovered."

In the morning he was as usual. The incident of the night immediately became unreal. The habit of years forbade Adela to break in on his privacy, and the habit of years forbade William to seek her help or give her his confidence.

Slowly outraged nature took her revenge. As the months went by the attacks of pain grew more frequent and more severe, and repression more difficult. Even to himself

William obstinately refused to admit that they were serious. But one day he had a severe attack at the store, and Travers the accountant sent for a doctor. The doctor was as securely entrenched behind his professional status as William was in his obstinate reserve. He prescribed absolute rest, and swept away William's objections as so much chaff. He drew Lionel aside and told him that his father's heart was seriously affected and that he must be freed from all effort and worry, and so bequeathed the case to the family doctor. William insisted on remaining at the store till his usual time, despite his very obvious illness. The next day Adela prevailed upon him to stay at home.

"I am suffering from dyspepsia," he told her, with great dignity, "a transitory indisposition, my love. I beg you not to incommode yourself on my behalf."

Lionel was even more distressed than Adela.

"I am sure Papa is very ill," he said to her again and again. "What can we do?"

The next morning William got up as usual. He set aside Adela's entreaties with the formal courtesy she knew so well. The day's inaction and quiet had done more than the most acute attack of pain to bring home to William the danger of his illness. He knew now that he had to set his house in order. He dressed with his usual care, but it took him much longer than he thought. In the breakfast-room Adela watched the clock hopefully, thinking that if he missed his accustomed boat he would not go that day. She heard him open his bedroom door, and rang the bell for the cook to send in breakfast. It had always been part of the household's subtle flattery of its master to make meals synchronize exactly with his arrival to partake of them. They heard William's steps hastening down the stairs and across the hall. They heard him fumbling with the breakfast-room door. Lionel sprang up to open it, and received his father's body in his arms.

Adela reproached herself bitterly.

"If only I had not let him get up—if only—if only——" But the doctor reassured her. It had been at best only a matter of time. William's heart had been so badly affected

that no amount of care could have kept it beating. Nothing could have saved him. His assurances could not touch the deeper reproach that she never uttered, that she had failed William as she had failed James, had failed him in love and sympathy so that he had borne his sorrow and pain alone for five years.

"Oh, Fanny," she whispered, "it was such a lonely death!" But Fanny did not understand; it was heart-failure, as the doctor said. But Lionel and Adela knew that William had died of a broken heart.

CHAPTER XIII

FIRENZE

AFTER William's death Adela and Lionel lived quietly on in the big house; the life of the Hill went on as usual beyond the gates, but seldom penetrated the tranquillity in which Firenze had wrapped itself away from life. The year's seclusion which convention demanded as a tribute to a dead husband lengthened out indefinitely. Adela received her friends and visited them, but for the most part lived quietly at home. The social round had never really attracted her, but her position as William's wife had demanded that she play her part in social life. She had never realized that it was an effort, had accepted it as part of the pleasure of life, but now that for the first time she could follow her own bent she sank gratefully back into a quiet routine that held her fixed in peace.

Of course Fanny still lived with them at Firenze. The upper floor of the east wing was tacitly hers in its entirety, and here she lived her own life, intruding little on the others, though they never lost the feeling of her presence and her occasional scrutiny. Fanny often thought with an unresentful amusement how hard she had striven not to share Adela's home with her, of how bitter it had been sharing that home, to stand aside and watch Adela rule it in her stead, so bitter that at times it seemed only the quartermaster's will that kept the house of Hyde together. Now, when they could quite easily part, it never occurred to either of them to do it. Her father's will had left Fanny an ample competence, a codicil added in the year she had left the store had increased the original legacy by one-half. She wondered if he had realized more than she thought what it had meant to her, had recognized in her something of his own feeling for the

business, that William, for all his successful acumen, never possessed. But it was too late for everything. She had definitely turned her back on the business that night thirteen years ago—only thirteen, but it seemed as long as life itself at times, and at times like yesterday—when William had told Adela that she was not returning. It was too late for that, as it was too late to break away from Adela and have her own home. Habit, more potent even than the quartermaster's will, bound them all together. She was satisfied there. She went four days a week to the city, where she still controlled the Poor School for Girls. Though public responsibility for the education of the future citizens of the State was growing, there was still ample scope in the crowded slum areas for its work. For the rest, she had her rooms here, overlooking the quiet courtyard and the Lane Cove River, which changed its moods from hour to hour as she watched it. Old Katie, pensioned off for some years now, steadily refused to leave Firenze for the little cottage near by that William had offered her. She took entire charge of Fanny's rooms, and when Fanny was there would sit and sew, and talk to her for hours of the old times. Fanny would hear, without a shadow of pain crossing her heart, Captain Hildebrand's name, and again Mr Moore's. She did not regret. Life had been hard and very bitter at times, but it was as it had had to be, and nothing could change it now. She was amazed at herself at times, at the detachment with which she could watch Lionel struggling with the responsibility that devolved on him at Windmill Street. Her detachment was amazing, but, she was to learn, not unbreakable.

Lionel was only twenty-four when his father died and left him unprepared to play the part of owner and manager of the vast complicated mechanism of business activities known as Hyde and Sons. It seemed strange, almost incredible, that so methodical a man as William should have died without making either a new will or other arrangements for carrying out the work. In the five years that lay between James's death and his own he had seen clearly enough, and the knowledge was very bitter to him, that Lionel had no gift for the work. He lacked the business sense, the necessary sense of

its importance in the scheme of life. William had seen this, and he had decided, reluctantly, to turn the business into a company, securing to his son the greater part of the income from the concern, but putting its control into the hands of a board. But he could not do this at once. It would have been very bitter for him to relinquish the sole control that he exercised. Even though the terms of the consolidation were to leave him in full charge, this step would destroy the individuality of the business, which since his father's seizure had possessed him more strongly than before. It was the soul of his house; though William had never put it so to himself, that was how he felt it, and he had never taken the steps that would have disintegrated it. So too with his will. He had never been able to bring himself to dispossess the dead son, who seemed so truly and inevitably his heir, in favour of the living one, who was alien to him. There would be time enough for both these things. He was still only in the prime of life when death came suddenly and struck from his hand the power to do them.

It was well for Lionel that the firm of Hyde and Sons had bred faithful servants. Benjamin Shirley, who had borne the tragedy of his own life and his wife's death with quiet fortitude, had broken down completely when the quartermaster died. During his long helpless illness Benjamin had never lost hope. The quartermaster's friendship had been the one strong, colourful, enduring thing in his life, and till the very end Benjamin believed that he would assert his will and triumph over death itself. He had had one outburst of grief, and then had gone back to his work as if a spring had broken somewhere in him. He had thought of resigning, but felt that he would not know what to do with the rest of his life. The mill had been his whole life for a long time now. When William died and Lionel was left to find his way among the thousand branches of the business Benjamin felt his chance had come. He could say to Lionel what he could never have said to William, and return something of what he owed to the dead quartermaster. Regularly once every week, sometimes oftener, he drove over from the mill to Windmill Street, and Lionel found his unassuming advice,

his long and intimate knowledge of the business, invaluable to him. Benjamin was happier than ever before in his new usefulness. Travers too, the accountant, was a tower of strength, and many of the hands had been there a long time; but, for all their assistance, the business hung like an incubus on Lionel's life. It seemed to him incredible and comic that it should matter vitally whether he should offer tenpence or tenpence-halfpenny for an article, even though the multiplication table convinced him that the difference sometimes involved thousands of pounds. He knew his attitude toward business was childish and absurd, and his diffidence hampered him as much as his ignorance. He made mistakes, and they magnified themselves enormously. He came home at night worried and exhausted, and sometimes not even the secret peace that held Firenze, not even the hidden harmony of his music or his mother's companionship could bring him back to tranquillity. Adela saw the strain it laid upon him. It was her one anxiety. One night as he sat at the pianoforte, his hands idle while he listened to the last strains they had evoked die away, she came to him.

"Darling," she said, "give it up, it is too much for you."

"What, Mamma?"

"The business. It is killing you. I have always known you were not strong enough for it."

"But, Mamma, there is no one else to do it."

"Sell it, Lionel," she urged. "Sell it. Your Aunt Maud was here to-day, and she was talking about it for a long time. Sophia Franklin told her that her husband would buy if you would agree. Oh, Lionel, even if you wouldn't sell it to him—I know he was your grandpapa's enemy and perhaps it might seem wrong—there are others who would buy. There would be plenty for us to live on. I can't bear to see you like this."

"Dearest Mamma, you exaggerate. I am tired to-night, I know, but I shall be all right when I am more used to it."

"But, Lionel, won't you sell? See Mr Franklin."

There was no treachery her heart would not contemplate to save her beloved. He was not to be sacrificed on the family altar, she had sworn it.

"Mamma, how can I? It would be impossible."

"No, no, dear, it is not. Don't decide now. Think it over and you will see that it would be right and wise. You will kill yourself, and it is killing me to see you wearing yourself out like this."

To soothe her, he promised that he would think of it, and the evening passed more tranquilly. When Adela had gone to her room Lionel walked down the shallow stone steps to the drive below, and stood to let the starlit peace of sky and earth and water sink into him. He stood for a long time, then turned to walk. As he rounded the corner of the east wing he saw the golden disk of light from a window above cut sharply in two by a slight figure, standing motionless. Fanny's voice came down to him softly.

"Lionel, I want to talk to you. Will you wait there for me?"

"Shall I come up to you, Aunt Fanny?"

"No, I shall be down in a moment."

When she joined him they walked quietly down to the lower garden and sat there. Fanny found it difficult to choose her words.

"Lionel, did your mamma say anything to you to-night about selling the store?"

"She spoke of it, Aunt Fanny."

"I thought she would. Maud had no right even to say such a thing. Lionel, I have never tried to interfere with you before, have I? Will you have the patience to hear me out to-night?"

"What is it you want to say, Aunt Fanny?"

Even to themselves the conversation seemed unreal in the brilliant moonlight that flooded the garden.

Fanny spoke slowly.

"I know you must find the business very difficult, Lionel. I remember how utterly lost I was when I first went there. It was a nightmare to me for a long time, and, of course, I had very little real responsibility at first till I got used to it. I say this to you because I want you to know that I understand how hard it is for you. But it is impossible for you to think of abandoning it. That business was your

grandfather's life. It was as much a part of him as his children. It was your father's life, too. I felt very bitter against your father once, Lionel, and my bitterness lasted a long time. I still think he did me a great wrong, but he never failed the business, and he carried it on after Papa died. Then there was to be James to carry it on after William, after your papa, that is; but James died, and there is only you left."

She paused.

"There is no need for you to say any more, Aunt Fanny. I understand better than you think. You have never thought of me as a Hyde, as one of you, neither you nor Papa nor Grandpapa. I'm not in some ways, perhaps. I haven't got the business-sense. I think Grandpapa must have had a special genius for business, and Papa too, in a different way. I haven't got that, but I am enough of a Hyde to know I couldn't possibly sell the business and just live comfortably on the money. Not even to please Mamma, though I would do anything else for her."

He got up and stood before her, his shadow, almost as distinct as in sunlight, lost in the dark trees beyond.

"Every day of my life I wish that James were here to carry on the business. It was his, it was made for him, and I am an intruder in it. But it has come to me, and I can never let it go now."

After another pause Fanny spoke again, and it seemed to Lionel quite irrelevantly. It may be that the inner thread of relevance was hidden even from herself.

"Maud seemed very changed to-day. I hadn't noticed it before. Fancy Maud being middle-aged and almost stout! She was a very lovely girl, Lionel; she turned all the young men's heads in those days."

"Her daughters are lovely now, Aunt Fanny. Cousin Maud is the prettiest girl I know."

"None of them will ever come up to their mother in looks. Let us go in, Lionel. I am cold."

They never spoke of the subject again.

II

Lionel learned in time to live, as it were, two lives—the active, busy life at the store, and the real life at home into which the cares of the former were never permitted to intrude. Adela grew reconciled at last; she lived for the evenings that brought him back to her. Mother and son never wanted any other companionship. All her life, Adela felt, had been a preparation for this. Her one dread was that he might one day marry, and as a rule that was only a shadowy fear at the back of her mind. It only leaped to the front when some friend would speak of his future marriage as a certain if indefinite event. She only smiled at Maud when she cried, "What a suitable thing if Lionel and Maudie were to marry! I declare they were made for each other." But at times her heart would constrict with fear. She could not lose Lionel. Adela prayed that she might not be selfish in her love, but Lionel was never so happy as in the long quiet evenings they spent together. She felt his content as certainly as she felt her own. The fear passed as day followed day, and time slipped by unnoticed.

One change they made, and took great joy in making. Lionel had grown up to an instinctive distaste for the ornate, over-elaborated furniture that had represented to William and his family the acme of good taste when it was bought. Quite unreasoningly, and without putting his feeling into words, he had felt the contrast between the noble simplicity of the rooms and the ugly ornamentation of their furniture. In England educated public taste was recovering gradually from the depths in which it had wallowed during the middle decades of the century. William Morris had established a workshop and was bringing into living practice his doctrine of beauty in everyday life, the beauty of the craftsman who loved his work, the beauty of simplicity. There was a revival of interest in the real artistry of eighteenth-century furniture-makers. Not much of this penetrated to Australia, but here too came a recrudescence among the few, of a truer feeling for line and form. Lionel met a young enthusiast of

the new idea, and was fired to make Firenze beautiful and austere within as it was without. He won Adela to enthusiasm, too. She had admired the old order, she would admire the new still more. Always she took colour from the people she lived with, above all from the people she loved. Together they planned and destroyed and rebuilt. They did it very slowly; room by room they wiped out the old and replaced it with the new. The gilded mirrors, the negro pages, the Cupids and the wreaths of foliage followed the pedestal sideboard, the scrolled chiffonier, the consoles, and the occasional tables into oblivion.

Fanny's rooms were for a long time left unchanged. She sometimes mocked at their bare rooms.

"I am too old-fashioned," she said, "to see any beauty in all this. Leave me my old friends. I should be lost without them."

Then suddenly one day she yielded, to no solicitation, only, Lionel supposed, to some secret whim. She was going away for a rare holiday to Gillam Park, where Maud had just successfully married her second daughter, and namesake, to a most eligible young squatter, and was taking a well-earned rest before turning her competent attention to the matrimonial prospects of Eugenia, the baby of the family. Frances, married some years ago to a naval officer, had a baby now, and Maud, lovely Maud, was a grandmother. Fanny, setting out for her visit, charged Lionel to have her rooms refurnished before she returned. "If not, I shall change my mind, I warn you, and they shall remain to be an eyesore to you till I die, young man."

But they were finished, and nothing was left now in the whole house to mark the intrusion of an alien life. The house had rejected the intruders and brought back its own.

III

Early in 1876, nearly five years after William's death, Adela received a letter from Esther which distressed her very much. Some years before the Bardons had moved from the Glebe, where their little business had almost died

of inanition, and had set up a small general store in Liverpool mainly on capital given them by Adela. It had done quite well for a little while, though neither Esther nor Bardon could be brought to admit it. Then it too had gone the way of its predecessors, languishing almost, but not quite, to the point of failure. With Esther farther away and out of calling distance, Adela found it easier to remember her good qualities. She thought of the absurd cockatoo poor Esther had given her for her birthday, and the havoc it had worked. She sent her frequent gifts and regularly a sum of money. Twice an attack of conscientious scruples and self-reproach had caused her to invite one of the girls to spend a holiday at Firenze, and first Phœbe and then Alice had come to spend a month. But they had not been happy themselves, and Adela could not force herself to send another invitation. Mary she had not seen for many years. Now Esther wrote on heavy black-edged paper to say that Horatio was dead. He had been ailing for some time, but as he had complained of illness all his life, no one had taken very much notice of his ailment. Even when he took to his bed it had not been considered very serious, but he had died; and Esther was aggrieved to find herself a widow with three daughters, none of whom had been trained to anything but genteel domestic accomplishments. Horatio's tiny income still remained, and when the stock and goodwill of the shop were sold they had a few hundred pounds as well. Adela made the long journey to Liverpool to see Esther, with a sinking heart. Esther always made her feel ashamed to be wealthy and fortunate, as if she were somehow cheating the rest of the world who were less fortunate than she. From that visit she took one clear pleasing memory. Mary's delicate prettiness had seemed to blossom like a flower in the dejected household. She was twenty-two, but her girlish ways seemed to make her much younger than her years. She was five years younger than Alice, and the two elder girls had spoiled her from babyhood. They were plain, angular girls, and the pretty baby had been the chief pleasure in their lives. They had kept her a baby as long as they could.

Adela wrote to Esther that forty pounds would be paid to her every quarter, and offered to take Mary for a long visit until Esther's plans should be more settled. The girl came, and Adela was surprised to find how quickly and easily she fitted herself to the life at Firenze. She seemed made for a delicate and beautiful life. It was a pity that Fate had cast her lot in mean places. She gradually took over from Adela many of the little daily duties that she had always undertaken but was not unwilling to relinquish. She wrote her social notes and accompanied her on her round of visits. Adela grew to depend upon her, and enjoyed the contact with fresh youth. Yet it was surprising, too, how little real difference her presence made in the house. She never obtruded; her presence never seemed to spoil the perfection of Adela's precious evenings with Lionel. After six weeks Adela wrote again to Esther, suggesting that Mary should make her home permanently at Firenze. She wrote:

> Of course, you will not lose her altogether. She will go to you whenever you want her or whenever she wants to return. But I think we can make her happy here, and she will take the place of the daughter I never had. I hope you will be pleased with my suggestion, dear Esther.

Esther's answer was grudging. It would have been more bitter but that Phœbe and Alice, fearing that their darling should lose her chance, persuaded her to soften her letter a little. But she consented, and Mary became part of the household at Firenze, sharing its secret tranquil life.

In the March of 1880, four years after Mary had come to live with her, Adela went one day to see Dr Bligh, whose big house over the way was the nearest neighbour to Firenze. She went alone, and when she came back she went straight to her room and sat there trembling for a long time. Mary came to the door, but Adela would not see her, saying over and over again, "I have a headache, dear, I only want to be quiet." In the late afternoon she went slowly round to the room where Fanny worked on the accounts of the Poor School, and sat down. Fanny saw that she had something to say, and waited, but it was a long time before Adela spoke.

"Fanny," she said at last, with stiff lips, "the doctor says I have cancer. He gives me a year more to live."

"Adela, my dear!" But she could say no more at first.

"Is he sure? You must see some one else, of course. It need not be true, it isn't true!"

"It is true, Fanny, I've thought it for a time myself, but I was too big a coward to find out for certain. To-day I did."

"Won't an operation——?" Fanny hesitated.

Adela shook her head. "I couldn't, Fanny. It would only be a chance at best, he says. It's only putting it off for a little while. If I have to die I want to die decently and quietly without a lot of fuss. I can bear death, I think, but I can't bear to be cut about—the awful knife!" She was weeping now, and Fanny came and knelt stiffly beside her, saying nothing, holding her gently.

"Oh, Fanny," she said, "it seems hard. I'm not an old woman yet, am I? I ought to be able to live a little longer."

There was nothing that Fanny could say. Presently she asked:

"You will tell Lionel to-night?"

"Fanny, I can't tell him, I am not going to tell him. We have only another year to spend together. I can't spoil that. If he knew we should never be able to forget it. He is not to know."

Fanny answered slowly. "You are wrong, Adela. It will be worse for him to bear later on. Once, long ago, when you were very ill, I learned that it was best never to keep others in ignorance if it is their right to know. We did it to keep James happy, but we hurt him more in the end. It shut his mind against us. He never trusted me in the same way again."

"But Lionel is different. I know his every thought, Fanny. He could not endure this last year with the knowledge of what was to come. I can forget it, I shall. We shall be happy all this year, and just at the end I shall tell him. Promise me, Fanny, that you will not say a word. You must promise me."

It was her right, and Fanny promised with a heavy heart. The year wore away, and it was happy as Adela had pro-

mised it should be. If she suffered greatly, no one knew of it. Only when concealment was no longer possible did she tell Lionel and Mary. In the April of the next year she died. Fanny and Lionel alone of the Hydes were left.

IV

Mary Bardon, creeping miserably from room to room, taking leave of it all, wondered whether she would ever be happy again. She had been there five years; it sounded so short when it was in reality her lifetime. She had never really lived till she came here, she didn't think she could live away from it. Her feeling for Adela had been the deepest emotion of her life. She had never been admitted to intimacy; Adela had been kind and affectionate always, but in those last years there had been room for no one in her heart except Lionel. He was all, but he was enough. But Mary had loved her perhaps the more for the gentle aloofness that she never penetrated. Yet now her grief for the dead woman was only part of a deeper sense of loss. There was nothing self-seeking in it. Only it was as if part of her life were being torn away. She came at last to where Lionel sat at the library table, looking at nothing. Timidly she spoke.

"I've come to say good-bye, Cousin Lionel."

He looked up bewildered.

"Good-bye, Mary?"

"Yes." Then as if she were a child speaking to another child, "You know, Mamma is taking me home to-day."

"But this is your home, isn't it, Mary?"

"Oh, don't!" she cried. "It breaks my heart."

"Why do you go if you are happy here? Mamma, I know, wanted you to stay always."

"I must go, Cousin Lionel. Mamma says I can't stay here now. There is only Aunt Fanny and—and you. Aunt Fanny does not want me. She is kind, but she does not want anybody." She was weeping openly now.

"I want you to stay, Mary. I want everything to be just as it was before Mamma died. That was what she wanted."

"I can't, I can't. Good-bye, dear Cousin Lionel." She

ran from the room and down the steps to the garden. She must spend her last precious moments there.

Upstairs Esther and Fanny were saying good-bye. These two old enemies had not met for many years till a week ago, in the room where the dead body of Adela Hyde lay. Esther had come as soon as she had heard the news, fiercely, protectively. After all these years she still looked on Adela as a stranger among these alien Hydes. She must have one of her own family with her at the last. But she came too late, and she never forgave Fanny. It was one more grudge added to the bitter store of years. Fanny had lost the bitterness, but still felt the contempt of former years.

"You must be very lonely. What a pity you have never married, Fanny!"

"Did you find it such a happiness, then, Esther?"

Esther wept a little. She could never hide the hurt that Fanny's cool mockery had always been able to inflict upon her.

"I have my girls. They are the greatest comfort to me."

"You are making them wait as long for their married bliss as you did for yours, Esther."

And so they parted.

V

In the closing month of that year Lionel wrote to Mary Bardon and asked her to marry him. There was no passion in what he felt for her, no ardour of any kind, only a deep certain feeling that she was part of the old life at Firenze, when they had all been happy and at peace. Perhaps she would bring back some of the old magic with her. Even as he wrote the letter, he seemed to feel it stirring just beyond his window in the tall trees outside. He was sure this was what his mother had wanted for him. Mary accepted him, and they arranged to be married in April, when the Lenten season should be over, just a year after Adela's death.

To-morrow he would be married, and yet it was the continuity of his life rather than the change that filled his mind. His marriage with Mary, whom he had known all her life and who had fitted so naturally into the last idyllic years of

his mother's life, seemed to turn the key upon the outer world and to shut him in a security that was like a familiar lighted room. He looked out over his garden where the shadows lay long and motionless, and beyond the garden to the quiet river. Everywhere there was peace. Far away, blurred and ennobled by the thickening light of the late afternoon, the city serrated the sky. It was a city that had never heard the tocsin or raised barricades, a place of peace and plenty. Lionel looked and looked until the dusk stole it away, as if he expected a sign or a miracle, a something he knew not what. He was ringed about with walls of security; no one in all the world was safer than he, but a doubt moved in his heart. He had so much and he had given so little—a heritage that was never meant for him, a power that he had no wish to use, a marriage in which there was kindliness and trust, but not love. The Hydes had always taken the difficult road, they had been builders and makers. Lionel knew that it was not for such as he that his grandfather had striven. Beside the old man who was dead, he felt himself a ghost. He did not belong to the Hydes, and their wealth and power hung on him like a garment that is much too big. He was the mouse that the mountain had brought forth. He turned away from the hour of ghosts to the lighted room, and drew the curtains.

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